State Teachers College
Warrensburg, Mo.
Class 817 Book F75j
Accession 44818

RUDY VALLEE
W.L. BURNETT
WILL DURANT
PEGGY JOYCE
JIM TULLY

THE JOHN RIDDELL MURDER CASE

A PHILO VANCE PARODY

VICTIM RIDDELL, JOHN
(Surname first)

PROFESSION Book Reviewer

CLASSIFICATION NUMBER	PRECINCT NUMBER	COMPLAINT NUMBER	DATE REPORTED
FOB-597	13	None	April 1, 1930

REMARKS MURDER: Victim died of acute boredom in his own library. Body discovered surrounded by the past year's Best Sellers.

SUSPECTS Theodore Dreiser, Jim Tully, Sherwood Anderson, Will Rogers, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, Calvin Coolidge, Katherine Brush, Richard Halliburton, Will Durant, Rudy Vallée, W. R. Burnett, and other contemporary authors found on the scene of the crime.

IN CHARGE Sergt. Heath (Homicide Bureau), District Attorney's Office, and PHILO VANCE.

ILLUSTRATOR COVARRUBIAS.

INDEX OF HOMICIDES.

Corey Ford

By (JOHN RIDDELL) pseud.

Previous complaint: "Meaning No Offense"

Accused of:

SALT WATER TAFFY

Illustrated by Miguel Covarrubias

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK - - MCMXXX - - - LONDON

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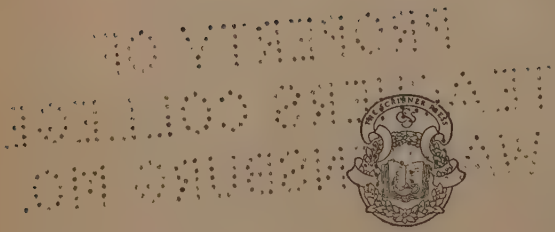

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DAVID CORT

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CHARACTERS OF THE BOOK

PHILO VANCE

JOHN F.-X. MARKHAM
District Attorney of New York

ERNEST HEATH
Sergeant of the Homicide Bureau

SLINK
The Riddell butler

PEGGY HOPKINS JOYCE
Former wife of John Riddell

THEODORE DREISER
A gloomy warehouse next door

WILL ROGERS
A hanger-on

SHERWOOD ANDERSON
Local gossip-writer

JIM TULLY
Local gossip-writer

WALTER WINCHELL
Local gossip-writer

WILL DURANT
Author of "The Mansions of Philosophy"

KATHERINE BRUSH
Author of "Young Man of Manhattan"

W. R. BURNETT
Author of "Iron Man," "Little Cæsar," etc.

CALVIN COOLIDGE
Author of "The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge"

BEVERLEY NICHOLS
Formerly known as Beverley Nichols

RUDY VALLÉE
A minnesinger

MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS
A famous caricaturist

FRANK CROWNINSHIELD
Editor of *Vanity Fair*

DONALD FREEMAN
Managing editor of *Vanity Fair*

DAVID CORT
Object of the dedication on page v

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
The Riddell publishers

GUILFOYLE
Detective of the Homicide Bureau

SNITKIN
Detective of the Homicide Bureau

WILLIAM BOLITHO
A criminal investigator

EDMUND LESTER PEARSON
A criminal investigator

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT
A criminal investigator

DR. EMANUEL DOREMUS
Medical examiner

S. S. VAN DINE
Author of "The Benson Murder Case," "The 'Canary' Murder Case," "The Greene Murder Case," "The Bishop Murder Case," and "The Scarab Murder Case"

JOHN RIDDELL
The victim

THE JOHN RIDDELL MURDER CASE

A PHILO VANCE PARODY

CHAPTER I

WHO KILLED JOHN RIDDELL?

(Monday, April 1; 9:00 a. m.)

In all the vast annals of modern criminal investigation, there is perhaps no plot more sinister, no murder more terrifying and no alibi more perfect than the John Riddell Murder Case. To be sure, we have frequently seen our best-selling criminologists—Mary Roberts Rinehart and Earl Derr Biggers and Frances Noyes Hart and Edgar Wallace and the rest —resort to trap doors, disappearing revolvers, false whiskers, bland Orientals, phonograph records with the victim's voice, and other bewildering devices, in order to conceal their crime from the reader until the very last page. But the strange affair which I am about to unfold is believed to be the first Murder Case on record *in which there was no crime at all.*

So downright diabolic in its originality was this simple device, so fiendish in its ingenuity, so warped in its psychological motivations, that the bold stroke might well have succeeded and

the true solution of this baffling case never have been known to anyone, save the author, had it not been for the eagle eye of a young criminal investigator known as Philo Vance. It was as a direct result of his canny observation of several apparently irrelevant and unimportant details of which the police had taken no notice at the time—the curious coincidence, for example, that the cigarette stub in the fingers of the dead man *was still burning;* the occasional wriggling of the corpse's nose in an attempt to dislodge a blue-bottle fly which had alighted there; and the odd fact that once or twice the deceased *entered inadvertently into the conversation*—that Vance's suspicions were first aroused; and by means of these vague clues, his fine analytic mind was at last enabled to penetrate this otherwise Perfect Alibi and discover the true solution of one of the most ghastly multiple killings in modern detective story annals.

The brutal and fantastic affair in the library of the old book reviewer became known almost immediately to a breathless public as the John Riddell Murder Case, owing to the fact that this title was used on the cover of the book. The

world no doubt is already acquainted with the external facts of the appalling tragedy. Yet the inside history of this veritable witch's sabbath of crime and slaughter surpasses even the wildest flights of morbid fancy; and as I sit down now to divulge the truth for the first time, I am oppressed by a feeling akin to unreality, as though the disasters which I am about to relate had never really happened, but were merely the products of a diseased brain which had read too many of the previous works of S. S. Van Dine.*

The series of uncanny and apparently unrelated events which constituted this palimpsest of horror began on a mild, luxurious morning in early April while I was breakfasting with Vance in the little roof-garden atop his apartment on East Thirty-eighth Street. Vance was a young social aristocrat who had acted several times in the past as a sort of *amicus curiæ* for his friend John F.-X. Markham, the District Attorney; and for the past five years I had deserted the cause of literature to devote my pen

*"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

exclusively to his sanguinary experiences.* It is safe to say that few criminal investigators in modern fiction have participated in more sinister, bizarre, revolting and seemingly incomprehensible crimes than Philo Vance; yet as I look back over my records,† I am convinced that the strange case which was first brought to our attention so forcibly on that morning of April 1st created an all-time record for public mayhem and sheer total of carnage only equalled during the heyday of the Borgias.

On the fatal morning of which I write, Vance had come to breakfast rather late, having been occupied most of the previous night preparing a brief monograph on early Hittite stamp-collecting for *The Philatelist Quarterly*—a task which the bizarre events of that morning rudely interrupted.‡ Vance was an indefatigable stu-

*"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The "Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

†"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

‡This monograph was subsequently published in *The Quarterly*, Vol. XVII, pp. 339–343, and practically revolutionized the history of philately in northern Syria and Asia Minor.

dent—I have it on good authority, for example, that Einstein composed his fourth dimensional theory on a few hints which Vance once dropped to him in conversation, Vance admittedly solved the Baconian cipher ten years before it became generally known, and he also discovered Professor Lowell's new planet with an ordinary pair of field-glasses—and his wide erudition was frequently the despair of the average reader.* Yet his intimate knowledge of such subjects as Egyptian hieroglyphics, toxophily, and higher mathematics had aided him more than once during his past Murder Cases in pursuing the investigation of a mystery which otherwise might have been solved in one-tenth of the time.

These thoughts ran through my mind as Vance lit a *Régie* cigarette and opened his copy of *The Mirror* as usual to Walter Winchell's column of current gossip. For some moments he read in silence, toying with his *omelette aux*

*In addition, Vance was equally well versed in Tao-ism, feudal Japanese heraldry, the feminine participial ending in Basque, Thibetan theosophy, jiu jitsu, the accounting system used among the Pisans, the genealogy of Tortulf the Forester, founder of the House of Plantagenet, and the correct attire for formal morning weddings. He also could play the marimba.

fines herbes and only giving vent occasionally to a murmured "Amazin'!" or "My word!" or "Extr'ordin'ry!"—his favorite expletives.

"'Pon my word, Van," he remarked at length in his emotionless drawl, "life in New York is getting a beastly bore. Nothin' ever happens, y'know. '*Clara Bow and Harry Richman have pffft . . . What Wall Street magnet with a longitudinal scar on his right cheek is that way over how many girls from the end in the front row of which chorus? . . . The C. A.* (*"We"*) *Lindberghs anticipate a blessed——*'"

He broke off abruptly, and the bantering look on his lean features disappeared. His sardonic expression of cold aloofness deepened, and his cruel ascetic mouth tightened with amazement, as his hard, gray eyes focussed more carefully on the fine print before him. "Odd; deuced odd! Perpend, Van." He adjusted his monocle and continued reading: "'*John Riddell, local tome solon, will fold up in his verb-and-adjective garage at 9 this* (*Monday*) *yawning . . .*' Amazin', what?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand," I said slowly.

"It's dashed queer," Vance continued, lighting another *Régie* cigarette intently. "I say, Van, hand me my Winchell diction'ry, there's a good fella." He opened the book swiftly. "Most extr'ordin'ry—yes, here it is—to be sure—" His eager fingers flipped the pages. "It's unthinkable, senseless, like black magic and sorcery and thaumaturgy. It's downright demented—still, it must be true—" He slammed shut the book and rang for Currie, his English butler. "We'd better have a look at once."

Currie entered the room noiselessly.

"My gray tweeds," Vance ordered, "a sombre tie, and the black Homburg hat."

Currie glanced at him sympathetically. "Has there been another——?"

Vance nodded solemnly.

"Y' know, Van, perhaps I should notify Markham and Heath,"* he confided to me as Currie withdrew. "Not that they've guessed the mystery correctly so far in one book out of five;

*John F.-X. Markham, the District Attorney, and Sergeant Ernest Heath of the Homicide Bureau. These honest, capable but uninspired police officers had accompanied Vance on all his previous cases; and their unique habit of hitting invariably upon the wrong clues had more than once assisted the reader in discovering the real culprit.

but I fear they'd be frightfully hurt if I actually solved a case without them." (It was the first touch of sentiment I had noted in the man.)

He took a portable telephone from his pocket, and lifted the mother-of-pearl receiver.

"Hallo, Markham, old dear," he began brightly. "Charmin' mornin', what?— Oh, nothin' particular. Just called to say there's been a bit of an ugly business at John Riddell's, and I'm dropping up to make a few observations *in situ criminis*. Thought perhaps you and the Sergeant?—splendid! Suppose you pick me up here at once. Right-ho!"

"For God's sake, Vance," I burst, "what is the meaning of that statement which you read?"

"I beg of you, old dear," Vance protested with a quizzical smile. "Middle-Broadway Winchell is a most difficult language.* Coptic and Assyrian and Sanskrit are Abecedarian beside it. However, let me give you the literal translation of a few phrases." He opened the dictionary and adjusted his monocle. *"Tome*

*Vance was an avid student of Winchell, which he could speak fluently; and he had translated many earlier fragments into English.

solon, n.: fiction referee; novel-and-poetry arbiter; current Mencken. *Verb-and-adjective garage,* n.: book mausoleum; reading asylum. *Fold up,* v.: to close down; bump off; go pfffft. . . . Not precisely Harvardian; but such, alas, are the idiosyncrasies of the modern Broadwayans."

"It doesn't seem to make sense to me," I sighed.

"But properly translated, old dear, it makes fiendish sense. Put into English, it reads: *'John Riddell . . . book reviewer . . . will meet his death . . . in his library . . . at nine o'clock this morning . . .'*"

"God almighty!" I breathed.

The impatient honking of an automobile in the street below shattered the shocked silence. Vance glanced at his watch, and I thought his face paled slightly.

"One minute past nine," he muttered. "Come, Van. Unless Winchell is mistaken—and he is never mistaken—I very much fear we shall be too late!"

As the big police car careened to a halt before the modest brownstone house in which John

Riddell dwelt, our worst premonitions were realized. The shades of the second-floor windows had been drawn; and on the extreme left window our startled eyes beheld an ominous white 'X.' Directly above this a wooden painter's scaffold had been slung on pulleys from the roof; and two curious individuals on the roof were slowly and ponderously lowering it by ropes toward the window, while a third curious individual balanced precariously on the narrow board, notebook in hand. As we dismounted from the car, an excited knot of magazine editors, Hollywood producers and would-be readers pressed toward us, eagerly brandishing contracts for serial rights, motion-picture sale, and book publication. We brushed past them impatiently.

"The vultures have already scented the kill," sighed Vance.

Sergeant Heath ran up the steep flight of stairs and rang the bell. The door was opened instantly by a cadaverous, chlorotic individual in butler's livery, who held a smoking revolver in his hand and studied us suspiciously through shifty eyes.

"Mr. Riddell is unable to see anyone," he said evasively.

"Mr. Riddell," said Heath sternly, "has been murdered."

"That's just the trouble," nodded the butler.

"Look here, my man, I am the District Attorney," said Markham, forcing his way through the door, "and I'm here to get some information. What is your name?"

"C. Bascom Slink," replied the butler. (I thought his voice quavered slightly.) "I entered Mr. Riddell's employment eleven years ago, following certain rather shady transactions in Czecho-Slovakia which have never been fully explained. My daughter, Elsa, had four children by him, and consequently I have always borne him a secret grudge. In addition, Mr. Riddell has left me his entire estate in a will *which was signed only yesterday*. So you can see that I have nothing whatever to do with the murder."

"Let's can all this guff," said Sergeant Heath impatiently, "and get a little action around here. Where's the body?"

The butler, his eyes like glittering pin-points, started to move away.

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"Just a moment, Sergeant." Vance's calm voice acted electrically upon us. "I should like to ask Slink if he is at all familiar with the Riemann-Christoffel tensor?"

The man darted him a keen glance. "My knowledge of mathematics is not extensive," he said, "but I am conversant with the Moulton-Chamberlin planetesimal hypothesis, and Professor Pickering's recent determination of the trans-Neptunean *O*."

"Fascinatin' study, astronomy," observed Vance easily. "By the way, Slink, perhaps you can explain the presence of that smoking revolver in your right hand?"

"My God, Mr. Vance," burst Heath in an awed tone. "I never noticed that!"

The butler's face had turned ghastly pale and he regained his composure with an effort. "I was up on the roof when you rang, sir," he fumbled, "doing a little ptarmigan shooting. As you know, ptarmigan are migrating this time of year, and——"

"In that case," pursued Vance in a mild voice, "will you be so good as to explain *how you happen to be wearing one tennis shoe?*"

Markham's teeth clicked together in amazement.

"I always indulge in a spot of tennis after breakfast," replied Slink sourly.

"On one foot?" snorted Heath incredulously. "That's a very poor way to play tennis."

"I am a very poor tennis player," replied the butler sadly.

"That will be all for the present, Slink," murmured Vance, and the faint ghost of a smile played about his lips, as the butler shot a malevolent glance in our direction and left the room swiftly. "Interestin' fella, Slink," he observed. "Those œdematous eyelids are very significant. And the short rachitic hands with bowed and thickened phalanges——"

"Surely you are not going to let him get away, Vance," remonstrated Markham. "The case seems perfectly simple."

"This case isn't simple, Markham, old dear," sighed Vance. "It's complex; oh, deuced complex. It isn't a rebus: it's an involved mathematical formula, filled with moduli, infinitesimals, quantics, faciends, derivatives and coefficients." He crushed a *Régie* cigarette decisively on the

ash-tray. "But ere we reach any conclusions, I suggest we visit that sacred adytum where the old boy whiled away his last hours. I yearn to become further acquainted with Riddell's literary tastes."

The Riddell library on the second floor of the rambling house was similar in shape and appearance to any other library in which an elderly victim might be found murdered;* but for purposes of clarification, I am embodying in this record a rough diagram. The gray light of mid-morning suffused the dusty room as we entered, revealing a depressing and gloomy retreat. On all sides the walls were lined with open bookshelves reaching from the floor to the ceiling, crammed with volumes of every shape and description: histories, romances, biographies; poems, geographies, cook-books, philosophies; books of adventure, books of sex-hygiene, books on etiquette, hooked rugs, early Byzantine plumbing, and the care and culture of aard-varks; all the best sellers of the past

*Cf. "The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

season, covered with draping spider webs and almost hidden beneath drifts of gray dust.*

And yet some curious and perverted sense of system seemed to dominate this dank chamber of horrors. As my eye wandered over the shelves of the sinister library, I could not help but feel a strange sense of awe at the uncanny accuracy with which the books had been arranged. Side by side on a shelf near the door, for example, were André Maurois and E. Barrington; Dr. Joseph Collins and Elinor Glyn; Bruce Barton

*Among the volumes of John Riddell's library I may mention the following as typical of the entire collection: Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front," Sale's "The Specialist," Lippman's "A Preface to Morals," Deeping's "Ropers Row," Dimnet's "The Art of Thinking," Heyward's "Mamba's Daughters," Peterkin's "Scarlet Sister Mary," Benet's "John Brown's Body," Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms," de la Roche's "White Oaks of Jalna," Glasgow's "She Stoops to Folly," Hackett's "Henry VIII," Lewis' "Dodsworth," Strachey's "Elizabeth and Essex," Bowers' "The Tragic Era," Freeman's "Joseph and His Brethren," Ertz's "The Galaxy," Rolvaag's "Peder Victorious," Seabrook's "The Magic Island," Ripley's "Believe It Or Not," Ferber's "Cimarron," Maurois' "Byron," Wilder's "A Woman of Andros," Roberts' "The Great Meadow," Mencken's "Treatise on the Gods," Wolfe's "Look Homeward, Angel," Komroff's "Coronet," Lamb's "The Crusades," Halliburton's "New Worlds to Conquer," Lowell's "The Cradle of the Deep," Ford's "Salt Water Taffy," and Van Dine's "The Benson Murder Case," "The 'Canary' Murder Case," "The Greene Murder Case," "The Bishop Murder Case" and "The Scarab Murder Case."

and the fictionization of Cecil de Mille's "The Ten Commandments" by Aimee MacPherson. Along the mantle over the fireplace rested the works of Sinclair Lewis, supported by two book-rocks named Nathan and Mencken. The fireplace itself had been constructed entirely of the ponderous volumes of Theodore Dreiser, piled patiently one on top of another; and the wood-box beside it was filled with assorted thin shavings by Eddie Cantor, Will Rogers and Chic Sale, ready to be burned. In the large section at the left of this fireplace, labelled "Ernest Hemingway," were to be found Morley Callaghan, W. R. Burnett, and Dorothy Parker. The section at the right, on the other hand, was given over entirely to all the authors named Wyndham Lewis. Another section, devoted to the confessional novels by ex-wives, ex-husbands, ex-mistresses and the rest, was simply marked with the general term "Ex-Author." Still another section, labelled "Your Choice for $.35," contained "Two Black Crows in the A. E. F.," "The Story of Philosophy (marked down from $5.00)," "Wolf Solent," Trader Horn's last couple of books, Erskine's "Adam

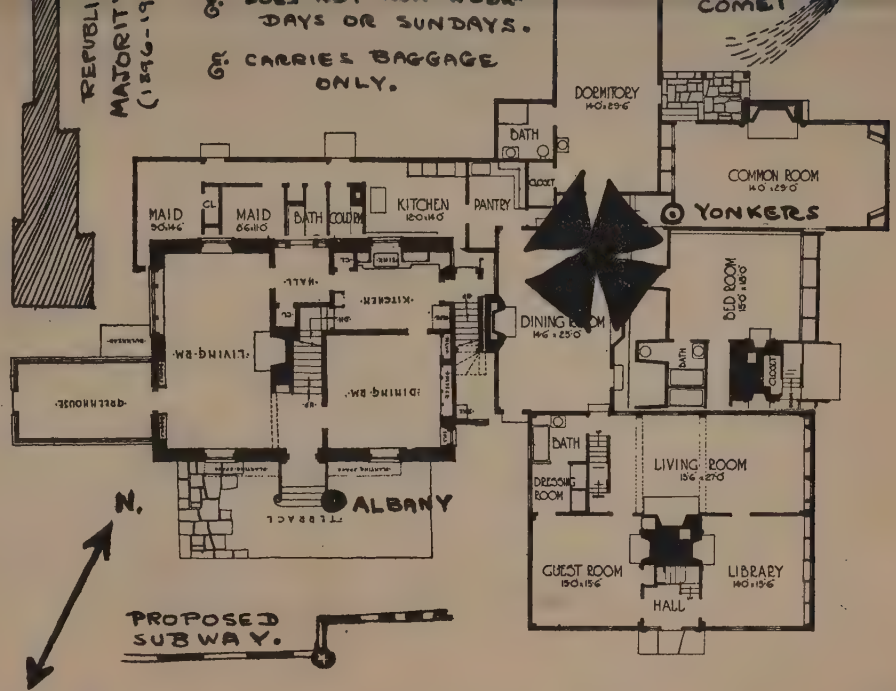
and Eve," and the collected works of Carl Van Vechten. Across the room the novels by Du Bose Heyward, Julia Peterkin and Roark Bradford were segregated in a special "Colored Section." The 587 war books that followed "All Quiet on the Western Front" were confined in a sound-proof safe; one wobbly leg of a table was supported by the works of Bernarr MacFadden; and a long chute, labelled "Edgar Wallace," led in a straight line from the door to the desk and thence out the window. The works of Richard Halliburton, on the other hand, were carefully located in a little room just off the main library, marked "Ladies."

At first glance the gaunt mausoleum seemed to be devoid of any clues. The large fireplace, to be sure, was littered with cigarette-butts, the paper jackets of several recent novels, and the charred fragment of a letter bearing only the cryptic words "Dear Sir: Under separate cover we are mailing you a copy of—" At the southern end of the room was a massive flat-topped desk, upon the fresh blotter of which the signature "lleddiR nhoJ," apparently Welsh, was visible where it had recently been blotted by an

unseen hand. The floor was covered by a worn mulberry-colored carpet; and over this threadbare surface a faint but definite trail of bloody foot-prints led from the fireplace toward the locked French windows, thence to the centre table, thence twice around the library in the form of a figure '8,' and thence to the grandfather's clock, where they abruptly disappeared. The remainder of the room was devoted to the usual run of telltale evidence invariably to be found on the scene of a murder: the small Egyptian scarab, the assorted finger-prints of various sizes, the blood-stained ivory paper-cutter, a torn handkerchief with the initials "J. R.," a coiled adder, and a little bearded man in a turban who walked rapidly out of the wood-box, dusting his hands, disappeared up the chimney, and does not appear in our story again.

For the moment Sergeant Heath had been busying himself with a minute observation of the bloody foot-prints on the carpet. Now he rose and faced us triumphantly.

"I got this case sewed up in a bag," he announced cheerfully. "Look at them prints—if you get close, you'll notice that they have the



GROUND PLAN OF JOHN RIDDELL'S LIBRARY.

marks of a rubber-soled shoe, with crossings like a checker-board on the sole and round spots on the heel."

"Quite right, Sergeant." Vance had become very grave and serious. "But if we may judge by the shape of the sole, they were made *by the left foot only*. I beg of you to look at the corpse."

"My God, Vance!" muttered Markham.

With a shudder of horror we turned to stare where Philo Vance pointed. Near the fireplace at the northern end of this den of death stood a low wicker reading chair, its right arm fashioned somewhat crudely into a book-rest. On this table-arm was a deep saucer containing the thick stub of a candle, which was almost surrounded by smoky wax drippings. And slumped in this chair, his bearded chin sunk forward on the purple folds of his plush dressing gown and his legs comfortably crossed, as in sleep, we beheld the body of John Riddell.

Riddell appeared at first glance to be a man of indeterminate age. His face was youngish: the nose was small and pointed, the hair receding, the right eyebrow elevated in a perpetual

surprised arc; and a long white beard descended from his chin almost to his waist, and was fastened behind each ear with a loop of black elastic. One limp hand still clutched a book which lay upside down upon his lap; and between the thumb and forefinger of the other was held a cigarette, from which a single column of bluish smoke rose ominously into the murky atmosphere of that gloomy retreat. (I thought little of this fact at the time; but, though seemingly trivial, it was to prove of the most sinister significance before many hours had passed.)

But what drew our horrified eyes in one direction was the extended legs of the corpse. On John Riddell's right foot was a rubber-soled tennis shoe. *His left shoe was missing.*

"'Pon my soul," Vance murmured. "There's more to this case than meets the eye. It is like a house in a nightmare, a house of mazes and false passages and reeking oubliettes, peopled by strange and abnormal suspicions——"

Suddenly he stiffened and jerked his head toward the window, at the same time lifting his hand for silence. I, too, had heard a faint noise outside, like someone putting his foot softly

through the pane. With catlike tread Vance crossed the room and flung open the great windows. Perched upon a wooden scaffold in mid-air, his notebook still poised in his hand, was the first of the three curious individuals we had observed that morning on the roof.

Vance seized him by his tippet and dragged him over the sill, struggling and protesting indignantly. He was short and stout, somewhat owl-like in appearance; his great horn-rimmed glasses, beaked nose, tiny moustache and pouting lips gave him an almost eerie effect, as he wrenched himself free from Vance's grasp and drew himself up authoritatively.

"Although the faintly blood-stained hatchet which an implacable minion of the law discovered in the cellar of that bleak home of Miss Lizzie Borden has long since disappeared, as well, alas! as Miss Lizzie herself and the other faintly incredible actors in that sanguinary drama enacted on a hot August morning at Number 92 South Street in the placid community-centre of Fall River, Mass., a drama which was destined to set the tongues at every breakfast-table in America breathlessly a-wagging

for months ere it wound its way at last into the fusty archives of history, nevertheless the macabre indiscretion shortly to be known as the John Riddell Murder Case is, in the humble opinion of your effervescent correspondent, the most—" began the newcomer.

"What's your name?" interrupted Heath.

"These random jottings would scarcely be complete," added the newcomer with dignity, "if I neglected to mention that the name of this energetic correspondent is, if memory serves, Alexander Woollcott."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Your bubbling correspondent was merely engaged in a mild effort to intersperse among the faintly familiar stories, with which he is gradually tottering into his anecdotage, a few harmless notes for the convenience of some future biographer of that singular specimen of critical fauna known as the late John Riddell——"

Abruptly Vance grew taut and signalled for silence. His eyes fastened on a large bump which had appeared under the carpet at the extreme end of the room, and was now slowly and

laboriously wriggling its way toward us beneath the rug. With a catlike gesture Vance seized the carpet and flung it back; and in the centre of the floor, crouching on his hands and knees, our startled eyes beheld the second curious individual whom we had observed on the roof. He rose with dignity, polished his *pince-nez* glasses and returned them to his nose, and bowed to us.

"The Riddell case is without parallel in the criminal history of America," he began solemnly. "It is the most interesting, the most unique, and perhaps the most engrossing murder which has ever——"

"Say, who the hell are you?" burst Heath.

"My name is Edmund Lester Pearson," replied the second newcomer calmly. "For a number of years I have devoted my talents to the investigation of crime; and I may say that my Studies in Murder are the most interesting, the most unique, and perhaps the most engrossing——"

"When we require the services of you gentlemen," interrupted Markham coldly, "we shall call upon you." He rang for Slink, the butler.

"In the meantime, I must ask you to withdraw."

"Did you ring for me, sir?" asked a muffled voice.

We turned in surprise to face a tall individual in butler's livery, whose flaming red hair contrasted strangely with two enormous white dundrearies which almost covered his face.

"And who are *you?*" gasped Heath.

"I am Slink the butler," replied the muffled voice.

Vance meantime had held up his hand for silence, and tiptoed up behind the newcomer. With a catlike movement he suddenly snatched the side-whiskers from the erstwhile butler, revealing to our surprised gaze the third curious individual we had seen on the roof. His brilliant eyes darted from one to the other of us belligerently.

"I, that is to say, am William Bolitho," he amended.

"Are you a criminal investigator, too?" inquired Heath weakly.

Bolitho nodded. "Murder is," he stated dogmatically, "the vitaminizing element in crime, both individual and social. But there is a special

reason for the inveterate illegality, or if you prefer, criminality of your true crime. Its adepts are rarely chaste, or merciful, or even law-abiding at all. For crime is the irreconcilable enemy of law; the criminal must be unsocial, if not in the deepest sense unsociable, because he is essentially a free individualist. What he does, he does for himself. And so, the criminal life is the first choice of the murderer. It is with desire of Crime, herself inseparable from her results, that he is greedy. It is our purpose, then, a little to elucidate crime, more to encourage it, to honor without hypocrisy the murders of men and women whose lives were less desirable than our own. Above all, to resolve that we may appreciate where we are not allowed to participate; that these criminals shall not have killed in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

"Incomparable," murmured Woollcott.

Vance meantime had been smoking a *Régie* cigarette with apparent unconcern; but the rapt manner in which he exhaled the smoke in brief

staccato puffs told me that he had been studying the three criminal investigators with keen attention. Now he crushed out the stub on an ash-tray and leaned forward.

"By the by," he murmured in a languid voice, "are any of you gentlemen familiar with the rhetoric of Thomas Aquinas?"

"Come, Vance," interrupted Markham impatiently. "Let's get down to business."

"But this is quite to the point, my dear Markham," replied Vance mildly. "I was about to ask these three gentlemen if they would be so good as to explain *how they each happen to be wearing John Riddell's left tennis shoe.*"

"My God, Mr. Vance," breathed Heath in admiration, "I gotta hand it to you." (I never liked the man so well as at that moment.)

"I am sure there is some mistake—" pleaded Pearson in confusion.

"If your quivering correspondent should succumb to a fit of the vapors—" began Woollcott.

"It is, that is to say, an error," added Bolitho, emptying his pockets. "To search me is to reveal euphemisms, euphuisms, parentheses, cir-

cumlocutions, analogies, theorems, quod erat demonstrandums,;,:—;(,);,..——"

Patrolmen Snitkin and Guilfoyle entered the library ominously.

"Take these suspicious characters down to headquarters," ordered Heath. "I want to sweat the truth out of them. We been layin' for these birds for years."

"O. K., Sarge," said Snitkin. "By the way, Doc Doremus* has just arrived to examine the body."

"Show him in," said Heath, rubbing his hands.

As the three crestfallen criminal investigators shuffled out disconsolately, Doctor Doremus tripped past them into the room. He was a thin nervous man with a jaunty air, who blinked at the company, threw his coat and hat onto a chair, and shook hands briskly.

"Well, well," he said, viewing the inert body in the chair, "you fellows certainly do keep me busy with your murders."† Without waiting

*Dr. Emanuel Doremus, the Medical Examiner of New York.

†"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

for an answer to this pleasantry, he stepped forward and peered indifferently at the corpse. "Tst! tst! tst! A plain case of *rigor mortis*." He struck Riddell's knee-cap sharply with the side of his hand, then lifted the eyelids and let them fall. "The congealing of the post-anterior muscles in the axillary fold of the vivarium is very typical; very, very typical." With a professional gesture, he placed a small thermometer under Riddell's tongue, tapped the chest of the corpse with his knuckles, and bent the head forward and backward slowly. Then he stooped to one knee, lifted the right arm and let it fall with a thud.

"Now say 'Ah,' " he ordered.

"Ah," said the corpse.

Doctor Doremus removed the thermometer briskly, glanced at it, and shook his head. "The diagnosis is *acceleratum hohohum,*" he explained. "That position of the jaws extended in a wide yawn, for instance, as well as the fact that both feet are asleep, are entirely characteristic of these cases. *The patient died of acute boredom!*"

"Bored to death!" echoed Heath in horror.

"In his own library," uttered Markham. "Surely that is impossible."

"Nothing is impossible in this case, Markham, old dear." Vance drew on his *Régie* thoughtfully. "It's a situation, a set of conditions—a subtle and deadly atmosphere, let us say—that's guilty. If we could only see what was facing John Riddell when those jaws opened wide in their last yawn," he mused, "I am convinced we should be a lot forrader in our investigation."

"If you gentlemen don't require me any longer," said Dr. Doremus, "I'll be toddling along."

"Thank you, doctor," said Vance easily. "And would you be so good as to ask the worthy Slink to wend his corporeal body hither from whatever sector of space he is at present occupyin'."

A moment later the dour figure of the butler appeared in the doorway and studied us furtively.

"Come in, Slink," said Vance casually. "I yearn to ascertain further data concerning the deceased. Like Goethe, I'm seeking for

more illumination. If one may translate, *Licht, licht——*"

"Yes, sir," said Slink suspiciously.

"Tell me, Slink, are you conversant with Poincaré's system of numbers?"

"In a purely laic capacity," replied the butler, "I have conducted several minor experiments to test Einstein's general-relativity theory, and have found that on the whole he was correct."

"Interestin' subject, mathematics," yawned Vance. "By the way, do you know anyone who held a grudge against your late master?"

"No, sir," muttered the butler evasively.

"*Cogito, cogito* . . . Drum your encephalon a bit, Slink," urged Vance, "and try to recall someone who might have desired to translate Riddell into the Beyond."

The butler shook his head stubbornly.

"Dash it all, Slink," said Vance, "he must have had *some* enemies who might have had occasion to wish he had never existed. Who were his publishers?"

"The Messrs. Scribners," admitted the butler uneasily.

"Charles Scribner's Sons, eh?" mused Vance,

turning to me. "I say, Van, aren't they the publishers of my own humble experiences?* A most amazin' coincidence! And who printed his articles?"

"The editors of *Vanity Fair,* sir," added the butler reluctantly.

"Ah! now, that's very interestin'," snapped Vance. "I suggest we have Crowninshield and Freeman† upon the tapis at once. Perhaps they will furnish the Ariadne's clue that will lead us out of this Cretan labyrinth."

As Slink withdrew to execute this order, Vance stood for some moments apparently lost in thought. He lit a *Régie* and wandered about the library slowly, now and again taking down a book from the shelves and returning it almost immediately with a murmured "'Pon my soul!" or "Most extr'ordin'ry!" Occasionally he would flip the pages over swiftly, and sigh to himself.

"Y' know, Markham," he murmured at length in a low voice, "I don't like this—I don't

*"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

†Frank Crowninshield and Donald Freeman, Editor and Managing Editor of *Vanity Fair,* a sophisticated monthly periodical.

like it a little bit. This library isn't normal, don't y' know. No man would voluntarily come by such books as these"—he indicated a copy of "Men, Marriage and Me" by Peggy Hopkins Joyce, "Ex-Wife," and Rudy Vallée's "Vagabond Dreams Come True"—"it just isn't natural, that's all."

He glanced briefly at the titles on the shelf above, and shuddered.

"Or Dreiser's 'A Gallery of Women,' or 'The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge,' or 'New Worlds to Conquer' by Richard Halliburton—" He shook his head. "No; it's positively inhuman. If we knew the psychological elements of the situation——"

"Don't get off again on your metaphysical theories and esoteric hypotheses," Markham interjected tartly. "We've either got to find a practical *modus operandi* or admit ourselves beaten."

"But, Markham, old man, you're beaten on the face of it unless you can put your chaotic facts into some kind of order. Consider the situation. John Riddell is found murdered in his own library. On the shelves we find such a curi-

ous juxtaposition of names as Will Durant, W. R. Burnett, Beverly Nichols, Will Rogers and the 'Baffle Books.' Surely an amazin' collection for an intelligent bibliophile!"

"Are you going in now for literary criticism, Vance?" The case had exacerbated Markham's nerves.

"You're so impatient, Markham," Vance smiled. "When there are no clues in a case—no *points de départ,* no tell-tale indications—one is justified as regarding everything as a clue—or, rather, as a factor in the meaningless puzzle. For example," he began, adjusting his monocle, "let us take a brief inventory of this singular library."

He strolled slowly along the shelves.

"What have we here?" He paused. "Kathleen Norris, the feminine Warwick Deeping! Can a woman forgive?—must a wife tell?—should an author write? Take mother-love, add the plot of Cinderella, one character named Kate, fill the glass with large, round, shiny, fat, white adjectives, and serve very thin with long straws. I say, Markham, what is *she* doin' in this library?

"Or the travel books!" He fingered them gingerly. "Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson's 'Lion'—the most perfect title of the year. Or Joan Lowell. Or Richard Halliburton, the Peter Pan of Adventure, popping up each spring like a perennial crocus in search of new Ladies' Clubs to Conquer—author of 'The Royal Road to Romance' and explorer of the Romantic Road to Royalties. The very presence of these authors in an intelligent library is in itself suspicious."

Vance stooped to examine a very low shelf.

"Or the Prize Package School of Literature. A souvenir free with each and every purchase! Take 'John D.' by Winkler, which gave away a free dime with each book; or 'The Cross-Word Puzzle Books,' which give away a free pencil; or 'Sleep' by Laird and Muller, which gives away a free reading-lamp. I wonder what they give free with Chic Sale's 'The Specialist'?" he mused. "Probably a perforated copy of the book itself would be the most appropriate——"

He paused and tapped a volume before him significantly.

"Or André Maurois, creator of the Chambermaid School of Biography. Filling his pen with dish-water, and writing sentimental treacle about Disraeli and Shelley and Byron, to the approving creak of a million rocking-chairs —and yet we condemn E. Barrington!" He crushed out his *Régie* impatiently. "This thing isn't normal, Markham. There's demonology, and witchcraft, and diabolic possession——"

"Come, Vance," said Markham soothingly. "You're letting this gloomy collection get on your nerves. Perhaps their presence here is merely an unhappy coincidence."

Vance's face darkened. "I'm afraid that's quite impossible, y' know," he sighed. "No mere coincidence could bring together Louis Bromfield, and Julian Green, and John Erskine, all on the same shelves. It's more than human strength could bear. I tell you, *I am convinced the secret to this whole dreadful business lies right here in this library!*"

Markham sat up, and his eyes narrowed.

"What do you mean by that, Vance?" It was obvious that the remark had struck some chord of agreement in him.

"This thing isn't over yet." Vance spoke with unwonted sombreness. "The picture's unfinished. There's more tragedy to come before the monstrous canvas is rounded out. And the hideous thing about it is that there's no way of stopping it. Nothing can now halt the horror that's at work. It's got to go on."

"You feel that, too!" The District Attorney's voice was off its normal pitch. "By God! this is the first case I've ever had that frightened me."

"Don't forget, sir," argued Heath, but without conviction, "that we got men watching this library every minute."

"There's no security in that, Sergeant," asserted Vance. "We cannot halt the fiendish plot now. Have you ever heard of a Philo Vance mystery which stopped with one murder? I tell you, this deadly business has only begun——"

There was a brief knock on the door, and the impassive figure of Slink appeared at the threshold.

"Mr. Crowninshield and Mr. Freeman, sir," he announced coldly.

As the editors of *Vanity Fair* entered the library timidly, we turned to stare at them with

interest. Crowninshield was the taller of the two; he was suave in manner, impeccably dressed, with waxed gray moustache and *pince-nez* glasses, one crescent-shaped pane of which he held poised delicately between thumb and forefinger. Freeman trudged silently in his wake, his brow furrowed with care, his pockets bulging with legal contracts, page proofs, and the "Married Maidens" section from the *Social Register*. Behind them trailed a long serpentine line of beautiful secretaries, stenographers, harpists, and bubble-dancers in pale flowing chiffon.

Vance rose, placed a *Régie* between his lips, and absently held a match to its tip. "So good of you to come," he greeted them courteously. "You are, of course, familiar with the African statuette-fetishes of Marius de Zayas?"

Crowninshield darted him a keen glance. "Although their clenched vacuity may be traced to the incestuous art of Manichæanism and the Cro-Magnon school," he agreed guardedly, "the rhythm, the texture, the chiaroscuro, the vitality, the impasto, the antipasto, the im, and the anti are more characteristic of Picasso and Matisse——"

"Interestin' subject, Art," yawned Vance. "Speaking of Matisse, perhaps you are not aware that John Riddell has been murdered?"

Crowninshield turned a ghastly pale, and he shot Freeman a meaningful glance. "Has he, really?" he replied, striving to regain his composure. "I'm so frightfully sorry. Miss Ballot, will you take a note: 'My dear Mr. Vance: I'm so frightfully sorry——' "

"Hold on, there!" interrupted Heath, seizing Freeman suddenly by the arm. "What's that paper you're tryin' to tear up?"

"Riddell's contract," answered Freeman sullenly.

"Ah! So Riddell was in your employ," pursued Vance with quickening interest.

"He was a sort of book-reviewer," explained Crowninshield, uneasily, "wasn't he, Donald?"

Freeman nodded.

"Now, that's real illuminatin'," smiled Vance, his eyes brightening. "And I suppose in this capacity he received all the best-sellers as they appeared?"

Crowninshield glanced at Freeman warn-

ingly. "I do not think we care to answer that question," he replied coldly.

Freeman shook his head.

"No? In that case," pursued Vance, leaning forward intently and playing his ace card with a smile, "perhaps you gentlemen can explain *how you each happen to be wearing John Riddell's left tennis shoe?*"

The effect was electric. As Markham and Heath started to their feet with a gasp of amazement, the two newcomers dove into each other's arms in terror, each striving to get behind the other and pull down his trousers-leg to conceal the tell-tale evidence. Crowninshield lifted his pale face imploringly over Freeman's quivering shoulder.

"We'll confess everything," he sobbed hysterically. "It is our fault. All unwittingly we, and we alone, sent that loyal reviewer to be bored to death. If we had only known—" He controlled himself with an effort. "Yes, it is quite true, Mr. Vance, that John Riddell received all the best-sellers. Each month he wrote for us a parody-criticism of the latest book as it appeared. Any one of these authors—Rudy

Vallée, or Will Rogers, or Richard Halliburton, or Will Durant, or Theodore Dreiser—might have been guilty of the fatal deed. He received them all, one by one, in this very library!" His voice trembled, and he burst into tears. "God help us, *he was planning to receive one here last night*——"

"Please remove these hysterical gentlemen to headquarters, Sergeant," whispered Vance hurriedly. "We may need them for further questioning."

As the sobbing editors of *Vanity Fair* withdrew, Vance stood for a moment leaning indolently against the mantle; but the manner in which he placed a fountain-pen between his lips and absently held a match to it, told me that some unusual speculation was absorbing his mind.

"If only we knew the identity of John Riddell's last visitor—" he murmured.

Suddenly he clapped his hand tragically to his forehead.

"Oh, my aunt! My precious aunt!" he exclaimed. "What a fool I've been! Of course—"

He bent over the corpse eagerly. "This book in Riddell's lap!"

He seized the volume and flipped the pages swiftly to the title-page. A slow smile of satisfaction was spreading over the face of the corpse.

"Jim Tully!" read Vance.

"There's your man!" cried Heath triumphantly.

Swiftly Markham snatched a portable telephone from his pocket and lifted off the receiver.

"Let me have Jim Tully at once!" he barked.

The smile of satisfaction on the face of the corpse widened to a broad grin.

"Hello—hello—" Markham jiggled the receiver impatiently. "Tully doesn't seem to answer. Hello——"

The corpse crossed his leg and chuckled contentedly.

"Hello!" shouted Markham. "Who is this? —Jim Tully's butler? I want to speak to Mr. Tully— *What?*"

Slowly Markham set down the receiver and turned to face us. The color had drained out of

his face, and he licked his lips in the effort to speak. His words sent a chill of horror through everyone present in that doomed library.

"Jim Tully has been murdered!"

CHAPTER II

ERIN GO BRAG

(Monday, April 1; 10:22 a. m.)

As the echoes of Markham's staggering announcement died away in the shocked library, the tense group relaxed slowly. Heath flopped into a chair and mopped his forehead; Markham replaced the telephone in his pocket, staring before him unseeingly; the corpse settled back in his chair with a sigh of content and reached for another book. Vance was the first to break the silence.

"Tell me, Markham." He tapped a *Régie* intently. "Did the butler happen to mention the manner in which Mr. Tully met his unfortunate demise?"

Markham nodded. "He was discovered lying on the floor of his study, pierced through the heart with a sharp instrument, like a pen-point."

"And did the butler notice whether he was wearing John Riddell's left tennis shoe?" pursued Vance.

"I believe he mentioned something of the sort."

"Extr'ordin'ry!" murmured Vance. "This case begins to assume amazin' proportions."

"Surely you do not think the two murders are in any way related?" burst Markham.

"'Pon my soul, I don't know," mused Vance. "The coincidence is sufficiently arrestin' to impose a slight strain on my *cortex cerebri.*"

"Do you mean that him and Riddell was both bumped off by the same gink?" asked Heath incredulously.

"I'm not saying that, Sergeant," smiled Vance tolerantly. "I'm only saying that if we knew the identity of the villain who stabbed Tully, we'd be a lot forrader with our investigation. The psychological elements of the situation——"

"Come, Vance, you're making too much of this coincidence," interrupted Markham sharply. "To me, it is very plainly a case of suicide. Tully visited poor old Riddell in his library last night, and bored him to death. Today his conscience troubled him so that he decided to end it all. It's perfectly simple."

"Entirely too simple, my dear Markham," said Vance. "In the first place, you do not explain the presence of the tell-tale tennis shoe. In the second place, you quite overlook the time element. And in the third place, you assume that Tully has a conscience." He shook his head. "No, dear old fella, we must not allow ourselves to fall so readily into any trap that the murderer has set for us. I am still convinced that the secret to this whole ghastly business lies *right here in this very library!*"

"And what do you propose to do?" inquired Markham with more than a trace of irony. "Read all the books?"

"Precisely," said Vance gravely. "I purpose to glance first at this interestin' volume which we just discovered in the lap of the corpse, in order to ascertain further data concerning the late Mr. Tully. What do you gentlemen know of the deceased?"

"I never heard of him," said Heath frankly.

"Wasn't he known as a writer-bum," recollected Markham, "or was it the other way round?"

"Splendid, my dear Markham," applauded

Vance. "Your erudition does you credit, old chap. Jim Tully, *sans peur et Sinn Fein,* the author of 'Shanty Irish,' 'Beggars of Life,' and 'Circus Parade,' is the hardest-hitting, heaviest-guzzling, tallest-talking blarney artist of them all. For years he has been writing the hard-boiled history of his ancestors in Ould Erin; and the present tome"—Vance glanced at the title—"seems to be typical of the best Tully manner."

"Let's have it, then," said Heath, lighting a black cigar and locking his fingers resignedly across his stomach.

"Perpend carefully," warned Vance, adjusting his monocle and opening the tell-tale volume, "for I am convinced that the clue to this whole amazin' business lies somewhere in the ensuin' pages."

He lit a *Régie* and started reading:

Erin Go Brag

(Acknowledgment: In preparing this characteristic portrait of his family tree, the author would like to express his indebtedness to "The Report of the Society for Mental and Moral Delinquents (1904–1929)," "A

Short History of the Kallikaks and the Jukes" by Prof. Hans Schmut, and the private library of Senator Smoot, for valuable information and statistics concerning vice and degeneracy which he has borrowed for his family history. He also wishes to thank Mr. Joe Miller for Irish jokes and anecdotes employed in this autobiography.)

My grandfather was known as old Hughie Riddell. Older than myself, he was a withered cigarette-butt drooping from the weary lips of life.

Age was as natural to him as knuckles to a fist. Him I never knew when I was not the younger of us both. He wore an old derby like the voice of little children.

He was a gentleman, and although he had a red beard, he seldom buttoned his vest. He had suspenders like a gorilla, and sometimes I recall he would sing for hours about County Cork (Ohio). His voice was as soft as the sliding of countless buttons through countless buttonholes in the long woollen underwear of time.

He killed fourteen men because they did not take off their hats in an elevator with my grandmother. He had married Biddy Riddell before I was born.

He was a loose garter around the ankle of Fate.

Still a child, I bought him a drink of whiskey in a saloon. He never forgave me for teaching him to drink.

"Me lad," he would say to me, "it seems there was a couple of Irishmen——"

Liquor coursed down his throat as naturally as a key in a lock, but he never ate spinach. He killed my grandmother for serving him spinach in a dish. He respected nothing among men.

His laugh was a shiny klaxon on the handlebars of the bicycle, life.

"—one was named Pat, and the other was named Mike—they was both Irish like yerself, me lad—yere mither was as Irish as the sigh of a rosebud drowned in angels' tears on Easter morning, she died of drink three years before you was born—and Pat said to Mike, in the dear swate voice of thim that come from the ould counthry, 'Can yez be afther tellin' me where is the ither side of the street?——'

" 'Bejabbers,' said Mike, 'and ye jist came from the ither side of the street——' "

Old Hughie tucked his fiddle under his chin, like a goitre, and called for a drink.

The bartender had a moustache as big as the hat of Queen Mary, but although his apron was wet with beer like the dew on the trampled grass of time, my grandfather called him Paddy. His real name was Paddy.

Life is a pop-corn ball of many colors. My grandfather put down his fiddle and drank. Then he spoke.

"'Sure an' that's funny,' replied Pat, 'because the man over there told me *this* was the ither side of the street——'

"Niver trust the Irish, me lad—they'd steal a joke from a dead man—I killed your great-grandfather—God rest his murthering soul, he killed *my* great-grandfather—because I grew tired of hearing his jokes—I ran him through the heart with a dagger over three feet long, and him drunk in his cups——"

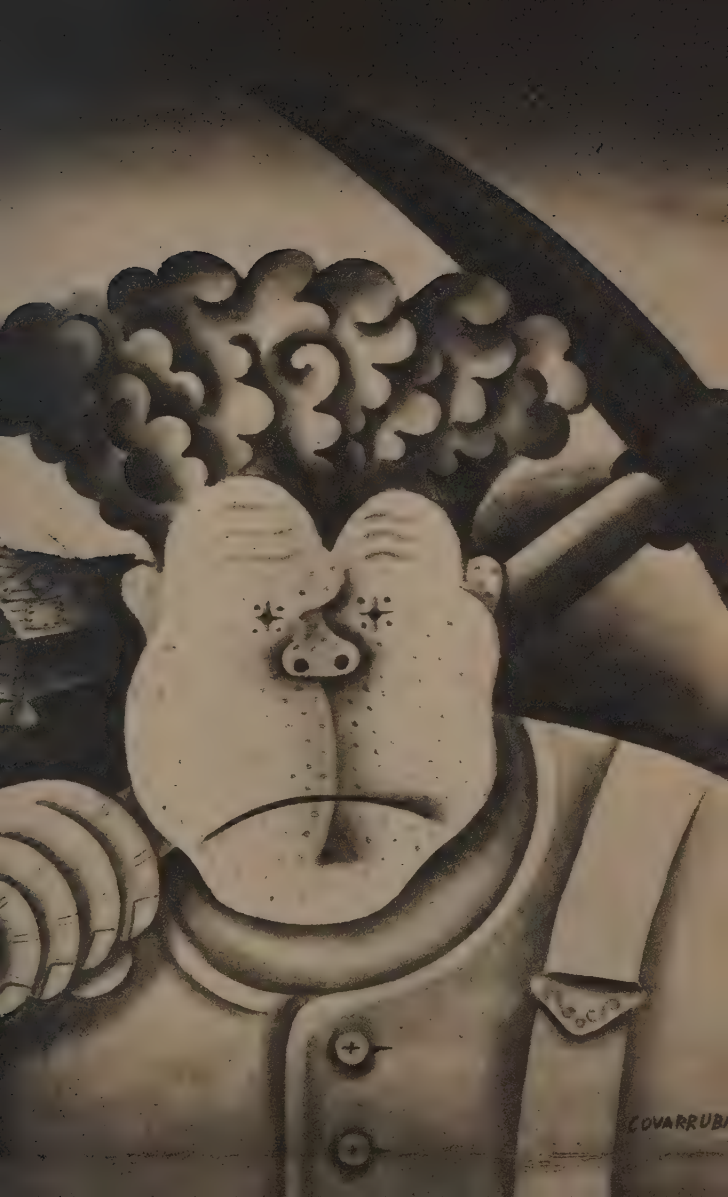
My grandfather gulped his liquor. He was a worn bristle in the toothbrush of life.

"My lad," he began again, "it seems there was a couple of Irishmen——"

My father wiped the smoking blade of a dag-

JIM TULLY

This shy little Irish potato, Trader Horn of the hobo jungle, last disciple of ancestor worship, horny-handed author of *Shanty Irish* and *Circus Parade,* shoulders his trusty pick-axe and sets out once more from his family estate, in search of some good rich dirt to turn over for his next autobiography.


COVARRUBI

ger over three feet long, and calmly put it back in his pocket.

"Come, John," he said, "yere grandfather will tell no more jokes——"

Old Hughie Riddell sat gnarled, stiff, dead, his red beard sunk on his massive chest, his vest unbuttoned like flowers in May. My father emptied the glass.

"It seems," my father began, "there was a couple of Irishmen——"

* * *

I wiped the smoking blade and put the dagger back in my own pocket. The next day they sent me to an Orphan Asylum.

Chapter IX

My father also killed my Uncle Dennis and his two sons. My Aunt Moll put arsenic in the whiskey which my Grandfather Lawler drank, but he stabbed her twice before he died. My brother Jim was hung for a horse-thief, my brother Tom was shot robbing a bank, and four other brothers died of drink in the gutter. Two of my sisters were jailed for soliciting, but I

burned the others to death when I set fire to the Orphan Asylum.

No Riddell ever died slowly.

We were all patches on the worn-out seat of life's pants.

I shall always remember those days in the orphanage as the saddest days of my life. Only a child, my sole pleasure was to pull the wings off blue-bottle flies.

I had learned to drink whiskey from a bottle before I was three.

I shot the superintendent in an argument over craps. His wife came at me with a shovel, but I wrapped it twice around her head and escaped, like gas from a sewer. Later she invested in stocks and became very wealthy.

I became a bum. Later I became a writer. People could not see that I had changed much.

Chapter III

My father murdered a total of three women, seven men, two children, a blind mare, and a priest. This was one man less than the total of my Uncle Dennis, but my father made things

even when he murdered Uncle Dennis. He was a rolling collar-button under God's bureau.

We lived in a brick tenement, outside whose door the black milkman, Fate, left his daily quart of trouble. We also subscribed to *The Graphic.*

My father was a gorilla-built man. All the Riddells on my father's side were built by gorillas. Short, squat and muscular, his gnarled arms reached to the floor, and his legs were so short that they dangled at either side of him. As a result he would often put his feet in his pocket and walk on his hands. He was a ditch-digger.

My father taught me to pour lead in the ears of sleeping relatives. He was a clever man, and he taught me many things. He taught me to break their necks with my two bare hands, like the faint click of roller skates on the macadam highway of life.

I dispatched my wife, three children, their nurse Minnie, and a pet dog in that way. I was growing tired of these pleasures. I tried dispatching my father, but even that did not help much. I was tired of pleasure.

Life was a raspberry seed wedged in the wisdom tooth of time.

My father had taught me to write, like sausage meat oozing from a grinder. I decided to write a biography of myself. I laid a sheet of white paper before me, tucked my pencil under my chin like a goitre, and began.

"It seems—" I wrote.

I glanced at the words suspiciously, and instinctively my hand reached behind me into my pocket.

"—there was—" I continued.

My hand had drawn forth an old dagger over three feet long.

"—a couple of Irishmen named Jim——"

* * *

Over two feet of smoking blade projected from between my shoulder-blades, as innocent as the first daffodil in the spring. I lay with my face turned upside down, staring at the floor, like the ceiling.

Life was only an obituary written by myself.

CHAPTER III

THE J. RIDDELL MEMORIAL AWARD FOR 1930

(*Monday, April 1; 10:53 a. m.*)

As Vance closed the book, Markham rose and faced him triumphantly.

"Surely you must concede now that my theory was correct," he insisted. "Tully himself admits that he took his own life. The whole thing tallies perfectly—the suicide—the long, sharp instrument—it all makes sense!"

"Yes, it unquestionably makes sense," Vance's quiet, drawling voice answered. "But forgive me if I suggest it fits the facts much too tidily. It's a perfect theory, don't y' know; it leaps to the brain, almost as though someone had planned it for our benefit. I rather fancy, old dear, that we're intended to adopt that very logical and sensible point of view. But really, now, Markham, Tully was not the suicidal type. He was too arrogant, too positive, too careless

of the feelings of others. No man of a sensitive temperament could have written the books he did—let alone read them."

"And what is your theory?" inquired Markham tartly.

"I'd say the motive was more fundamental —that it had its matrix in some powerful but suppressed human passion——"

There was a sharp knock on the door, and Snitkin handed Sergeant Heath a blue envelope. He glanced at the contents briefly, then thrust it carelessly into his pocket.

"What have you there, Sergeant?" inquired Vance mildly.

"Nothin' special," replied Heath in an offhand tone. "Just a cablegram from Switzerland that some guy named Edward J. O'Brien got bumped off this morning."

"Ah! but that's very int'restin', Sergeant," said Vance. "If I mistake not, this O'Brien was rather well known in American lit'rary circles. I believe that he busied himself each year with a collection of the Best Short Stories of the year, which he selected from the six hundred published annually, and edited with an appro-

priate introduction. His collection, and the O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Short Stories, form the two outstanding annual anthologies of American short stories——"

"Come, Vance," interposed Markham tartly. "Surely these literary discussions are a little aside from the point. What has the death in Switzerland of the editor of some anthology of American short stories got to do with the problem right here in this library?"

"Bear with me a bit, old dear," begged Vance. "I've been evolvin' a rather fantastic theory, and I want to test it a trifle further. Does your radiogram state, Sergeant, in just what manner he met his death?"

Heath studied the blue slip with a frown. "He was found in his library," he said slowly, "stabbed through the heart with a long sharp instrument. That's all."

"And how was he attired at the time?" pursued Vance eagerly.

" 'Wearing a dark blue suit,' " read Heath, " 'green shirt with spotted red tie, white socks, low oxford on right foot, rubber-soled tennis shoe on left—' " He broke off in amazement.

"Good God, Mr. Vance! You're right as rain!" He shook his head. "Say, there's cold bloodedness for you! And nerve, too!"

"There's plenty of cold-bloodedness and nerve in this case," agreed Vance. "A relentless determination is back of these murders—and calculation no end!"

"I still do not see how the death of O'Brien has any direct bearing on this case," objected Markham.

"Ah! that's it," agreed Vance. "If we only had some direct evidence at hand—some *point de départ,* some tell-tale spoor——"

His quick eye roved the silent library.

"Oh, my precious aunt!" he exclaimed suddenly. "That book in the lap of the corpse—of course——"

He crossed the room with cat-like stride and seized the volume which Riddell was holding. The corpse opened one eye and glanced at him resentfully, then reached over to an adjoining shelf and selected another with a shrug of resignation. Vance meantime turned swiftly to the title-page.

"Here we are!" he announced tragically.

" 'The J. Riddell Memorial Award Prize Short Best Stories of 1930!' "

"Read it, Vance," urged Markham excitedly.

Heath settled back in his chair and lit his cigar thoughtfully.

"Follow me carefully," said Vance, adjusting his monocle. "*I feel we are on the track at last.*"

He commenced reading in a suave, drawling tone:

J. RIDDELL MEMORIAL AWARD PRIZE SHORT BEST STORIES OF 1930

Introduction

BY EDWARD J. O'HENRY

Encouraged by the success of all the other anthologies of short stories published annually in America, it has been decided this year to found the J. Riddell Memorial Award; and for the initial volume the editors have done me the honor of asking me to write the same Introduction which I have been writing every year for my own collections of short stories, known as the *Best Short Stories of 1915*, the *Best Short*

Stories of 1916, the *Best Short Stories of 1917,* the *Best Short Stories on Land and Sea,* the *Best Short Stories in the Andes,* and the *Best Short Stories at Yale.*

In presenting, therefore, the first, if not last, volume of Prize Stories, I should like to take the opportunity to explain briefly the operation of the J. Riddell Memorial Award. This Award, as its name implies, was founded in honor of J. Riddell, the late short-story writer (his short stories were anywhere from one to five years late). Every year a selected Committee will choose the Best Stories of the Year, which will be published in an annual volume entitled *The J. Riddell Memorial Award Prize Short Best Stories of 1930;* and the proceeds of this volume will be presented to J. Riddell, in the form of an Award. In addition there will be three prizes of $500, $200, and $100 or its equivalent in merchandise, for any one offering the best solution to the question of why these particular stories were chosen.

The authors, on the other hand, get a dinner.

Perhaps the most unique feature of the *J. Riddell Memorial Award Prize Short Best*

Stories of 1930 is the fact that it is published *before any of the stories included in it are written.* This does not affect in any way the quality of the stories, and it also allows the *J. Riddell Memorial Award Prize Short Best Stories of 1930* (hereafter known as Harry) to score a distinct scoop on all the other anthologies, which will be publishing these self-same stories several months from now.

It is difficult for the average reader to imagine the gigantic task which confronts the editor of an anthology of short stories, before he may select those which conform most accurately to his standards of art, construction and reader-appeal. Since there are over sixty magazines from which these stories are selected, and since these magazines average annually anywhere from two to five hundred stories, this means that he must read something like five thousand stories a year in America, to say nothing of a similar number in England for his *Anthology of British Best Stories.* And reading ten thousand stories a year, counting time off for meals and every other Thursday, represents an average working-day of about thirty-seven hours,

leaving him just seven minutes a year to award his prizes, light a cigarette, and clear his desk for next year's batch. His task of finding a day with thirty-seven hours in it is alone colossal.

The method of selection may also be of interest to the average reader. In the first place, all short stories with a happy, or even a bearable, ending are automatically rejected. This leaves about ninety per cent of the short stories published in America. These remaining stories are then sorted carefully into separate piles, according to the colors of the covers on the magazines in which they appear; and the editor blindfolds himself, turns around three times, and then proceeds forward in a straight line across the room, out the front door, down the steps, and across the street to Tony's. By the time he returns all the magazines have been given away to the Salvation Army, and he is forced to write the Best Stories himself, under assumed names.

In order to assist the editor in his monumental task, the stories in this present volume have been grouped under the following heads: (1), The Gloomy Mid-West Story; (2), The Flying Story; (3), The Cowboy Story; (4), The

Clinical Sophistication Story; (5), The Twist. There has been a distinct reaction this year against Suburban, Cape Cod and Russian stories, and the percentage of heroic collies, stories of the younger generation, sea stories, and stories of degenerate artists in Parisian cafés has also materially reduced. Fathers and sons, on the other hand, are coming back into vogue, and an increase in adolescent love has also been noted among the women's magazines. In other words, the American Short Story has made tremendous strides during the past year,—so tremendous in fact, that it is now almost back where it was in 1915, when I first started collecting.

In concluding the Introduction to *The First J. Riddell Memorial Award,* I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the editors who have labored so hard to make this volume a success. Where would the American Short Story be to-day without these editors? For that matter, where would these editors be without the American Short Story?

EDWARD J. O'HENRY.

"Among My Books,"
New York.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1930

THE DUMPS

(The Gloomy Mid-West Story)

BY MORTIMER L. F. SUET

Minnie Timkins stared out the window across the desolate prairie, drab and flat and hopeless. A wet rain dripped from the eaves, like the cold water tap in the kitchen sink. She thought of the kitchen sink, piled high with last week's breakfast dishes, on which the grease had hardened in gray lumps. They had not eaten since last Thursday.

The door slammed. Eben shuffled to the coat-closet to hang up his coat. She did not raise her eyes: "The baby died to-day, Eben."

He did not reply. He had hung himself in the coat-closet, inside his coat.

There was a revolver in the top bureau drawer, but she was too weary to cross the room to get it. Outside the window the rain dripped

steadily over the dull, empty, futile prairie. Drip. Drip.

She broke her arm at the elbow, just to hear it snap.

Copyright, 1928, Transition.

UPSIDE LOOKING DOWN

(*The Flying Story*)

BY ELLIOTT MONK BELLAH

B Flight blipped their motors and zoomed. Requ had taken the roof at eighteen thousand, and was skirting the wisps. Suddenly below him Brett saw a Hun two-seater. The old stunt. Perritt pulled up on his nose to climb above. Then L-Z threw himself up and over into an Immelman, and he came up under the tail, just as one of the Camels hurtled into a nose-dive. Too late. His Lewis had jammed. He yanked madly at the cocking lug, but the random was pip. Requ fuselled again. In vain Laurie caught at his thrashing joy-stick, but the jigger was averted, and the whole tribune splintered like fudge under his hand, as the left wing castored into up, then slowly taxied around, reversed, el-

bowed helplessly out of a nose, into an ear, out the other, following the wake of Perritt . . . down . . . down . . . down. . . .

Copyright, 1926, Saturday Evening Post.
Copyright, 1927, Collier's Magazine.
Copyright, 1928, Liberty.

THE LONE RIDER OF TARNATION GULCH

(*The Cowboy Story*)

BY ZANE MIX

"Put 'em up, thar!"

The crisp command rang out above the tinny rattle of the cheap piano in "Ye Olde Lavender Kettle" Saloon, and forty pairs of hands shot into the air, with a deafening report.

Forty pairs of eyes watched the masked stranger in the doorway.

"Drap them thar shootin' irons," continued the even voice, sighting down the cold muzzle of his gun, "or I'll empty the contents of this magazine (*adv.*)." And by his tone the dissolute crowd of cattle-rustlers knew that he meant what he said.

"What you want of us-all, pardner?" whined Saunders.

"I come fer Prairie Rose," the stranger replied, "her with a voice like a nightingale, whut come out o' nowhere to warm our hearts with song—Gawd bless 'er."

The beaded curtains parted, and the beautiful dancer stared at the bearded stranger in wide-eyed surprise. Gently he reached down inside his dust-stained shirt and drew forth a tiny locket on a gold chain.

"Mother," said the stranger simply.

Copyright, 1924, McCall's Magazine.

HE WOULD IF HE COULD; OR, THE TATTOOED BEAVER

(*The Clinical Sophistication Story*)

BY PARODY KEENE

She sat in the bath and opened her mail slowly. Poor André. Gently she slit the envelope open and pressed his burning letter to her wet lips.

". . . my beloved," she read, "my own, my sweet, my pet, my life. Your André."

She tore his impassioned note into shreds, and watched them drift down the tub toward her rouged knees, that rose like tropical islands above the surface of the scented water. *C'est ça.* It was thus she tore her heart into shreds, and let them float down the bathtub of life, out of her memory forever. She must forget André. Raoul must never knew.

There was a draft blowing upon her back. Raoul! She rose and faced him with arms outstretched, as he climbed through the bathroom window, his eyes ablaze with love for her. Dear Raoul. Sweet Raoul. "Dear Raoul," she said. "Sweet Raoul."

"My beloved, my own, my sweet, my pet, my life. . . ."

What did life matter without Raoul? He was pressing kisses to her forehead, her eyes, her nose, her lips. . . . What was sin, so long as he trusted her? . . . He was kissing her chin, her throat. . . . No, she would put André from her life forever. . . . He had dropped to his knees before her. . . . Yes, she was Raoul's woman from now on—Raoul's woman in the primitive sense. . . . What was this? He had

paused in the act of kissing her. He was staring fascinated at her knee.

With a cold horror she gazed downward. Pressed to her knee-cap, clinging to the damp flesh with a fatal persistence, was a tell-tale triangle of wet paper: ". . . sweet, my pet, my life. Your André."

For a moment she stood tense, fists clenched, as the door of the bathroom slammed behind Raoul. Gone. Gone from her life forever. Slowly, like a wilting flower, she bent low.

"You may come out from under the tub now, Claude," she whispered softly.

Copyright, 1928, Vanity Fair.

THE FACE IN THE REVOLVING DOOR

(*The Twist*)

BY JOHN RIDDELL

"Who are you?" he cried fearfully.

The bland Oriental drew off his wig and smiled. Inspector Donnelly stared in surprise at the erstwhile Ling Wu, now revealed before him as none other than Mabelle Le Claire.

"My darling . . . my wife . . ." he gasped. "This has all been a plot to test your affection for me. I wanted to arouse your jealousy so that you would forget Claude Harrington."

With a slight sneer Mabelle Le Claire whipped out a revolver and shot him in the stomach. Swiftly she fastened a black moustache to her upper lip and bent over the dying man with a leer.

"*I* am Claude Harrington," she hissed in triumph. "Who are you?"

With a feeble gesture Inspector Donnelly plucked the white beard from his chin.

"I am Mabelle Le Claire," replied the late William L. Van Aimée, Jr.

Copyright, 1904, by O. Henry.

THE J. RIDDELL MEMORIAL AWARD FOR 1930

THE YEARBOOK OF THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY, JUNE, 1930, TO JUNE, 1930

THE JUDGES:

Mrs. W. Q. McPlash, A. M., P. M., Instructor in English at State Normal School for Feeble-Minded, Wilgus, Wisconsin. Story writer.

Loretta Diana Deeples Goush, winner of Silver Badge, St. Nicholas League (1881); attended High School in Duluth. Story writer.

Mrs. Messersmith, contralto; chairman of the Literary Section of the Montclair (N. J.) Tuesday Ladies' Bicycle and Whist Club. Story writer. Also had one accepted.

Subst.: Osterholz for Messersmith (2); Osterholz for McPlash (3); Osterholz for Blee (4); Osterholz for himself, from now on, and to hell with everybody.

ROLL OF HONOR AMONG MAGAZINES:

Abbreviations:	*Averages:*	*Fin.:*
Awf. Glug.	96	1^2
Brx.	1	$2^{11}/_2$
Zblu. Mli.	131¾	3^h
Oo.	17	4
Growgle J.	No Sale	5

Three furlongs, Post, 2:04; off, 2:07. Winner ch. g., 3, by Beet—Squidgums Time 0:35¼.

Scratched: Spanish Onion; Wee Wee.

INDEX OF STORIES PUBLISHED IN 1929

Hogan, Mike ("Kid")

** I Dreamt I was a Lily of the Valley, FV. X Apr., '29 (17)

**** Life is a Pretty Funny Proposition, Qug. Ff. May, '29 (313)

Reeperclotz, Lillian Van R.

*** Where Men are Men, Cowb. St. Feb., '29 (2)

Hemingway, Ernest

The Killers, Scr. Mar., '27 (361)

Ostensibly, Maria

******** Three Times Three is Three; or, The Rover Boys in Business, Whish. Pf. Feb. 17, '29 (126:318)

** Does not run week-days or Sundays. ** These dishes are ready. *** Wall Street Final. **** Stops on signal at Boggy Meadows. ******** Girl friend of the editor.*

CHAPTER IV

AN OPEN LETTER TO WILL ROGERS

(Monday, April 1; 11:31)

"My God, Mr. Vance!" burst Heath, as Vance closed the book ominously. "Will there be no end to this grim carnage?"

"Not until we have the murderer safely gyved," replied Vance. His face darkened; his mouth was as cruel as Pietro de' Medici's. "This hellish business isn't ended. The final picture is only just emerging. And it's damnable—worse than any of the horrors of Rops or Doré or Van Dine."*

Markham nodded with dismal depression.

"Yes, there appears to be an inevitability about these tragedies that's beyond mere human power to combat." He got up wearily and commenced to pace the library. "We seem utterly helpless."

*"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid*).; "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

"If we could but guess the intended victim," mused Vance, "we might yet forestall his impending fate. Who will be next?—who——?"

"One moment, Vance!" Markham's crisp tones rang out sharply in the gloomy library. "What is this volume in Riddell's lap?"

"A clue!" cried Vance eagerly. "Let me see!"

He snatched the book eagerly. The corpse seemed about to open its mouth in protest, then apparently changed its mind. With a sigh it reached out to the shelf for another book instead, and resumed its reading sourly.

Vance turned the pages swiftly, and when he spoke it was with unwonted solemnity.

"Markham," he advised in an undertone, "I suggest you endeavor to get Will Rogers on the phone at once."

Markham glanced at him in horror. "Rogers, too?"

"I may add," nodded Vance, "that I fear the worst."

With a suppressed oath the District Attorney seized the portable telephone from his pocket, lifted off the receiver, and called a private number in California.

"Will Rogers," mused Heath. "Ain't he the bird that's always endorsin' chewin' gum in the ads?"

Vance nodded. "Will Rogers," he explained patiently, "is an alleged cowboy who has achieved some local reputation by dressing up in leather chaps, twirling a rope, and touring the vaudeville circuits offering wise cracks about current personalities, which he delivers in a disarming drawl. Lately he has been adding to his *kudos* by endeavoring to write——"

"Hello, hello," barked Markham, jiggling the receiver impatiently.

"I didn't know he wrote," persisted Heath. "I thought he just done them little paragraphs for the newspapers."

"His particular claim to fame seems to rest upon the fact that he knows all the celebrities by their first names," resumed Vance, "even though he may not know them by their last. Of late he has been given to penning long Open Letters to Al Smith, or the Prince of Wales, or Calvin Coolidge, criticising them for their errors and advising them how to conduct their private affairs."

"I should think somebody'd write an open letter to him," said Heath indignantly.

"Apparently, Sergeant," smiled Vance, glancing at the book in his hand, "that is what has just been attempted here——"

"Hello!" Markham waved his hand to us for silence. "Hello, is this Will Rogers' home? Who is this— The butler? Hello? This is District Attorney Markham of New York, and I wish to speak with Mr. Rogers— *What?"*

His face drained to a ghastly white, and he set down the receiver slowly. Vance glanced at him questioningly.

"Stabbed through the heart," nodded Markham slowly. "And on his left foot——"

"John Riddell's tennis shoe," finished Heath in awe.

The corpse took a deep drag from his cigarette, and exhaled the smoke in a luxuriant cloud above his head.

"What's the book in your hand, Vance?" inquired Markham soberly. "Perhaps it has some clue."

" 'An Open Letter to Will Rogers,' " Vance read.

"Let's hear it," muttered Markham. "This may be our clue at last."

Markham and Heath settled themselves attentively. Vance adjusted his monocle, lit a *Régie,* and began:

AN OPEN LETTER TO WILL ROGERS

DEAR WILL,

Well, all I know is just what you write in the papers.

For instance, I been watching how you write all these Open letters to people in the newspapers and in *The Saturday Evening Post* and other places, telling em just what is wrong with them and what are their Faults and what they ought to do about it. I seen a lot of letters where you been explaining how to run the Goverment, or telling what you would do if you was Al Smith or Coolidge, and I know it must keep you pretty busy taking care of everybody elses Business for them. Well, so I kinder figgered, if Will can write these open letters to people telling them where to get off, why then I dont see why somebody cant write an open letter to Will.

Poor Will, probly he gets pretty lonely writ-

ing all these Open Letters and nobody ever answers him, why I should think he would be darned glad to have somebody write back fer a change. Sometimes a feller gets a curious idear of himself, sometimes he begins to get Notions he is Mark Twain, or Mr. Dooley, and that he is a famous humorist who is sort of the Spokesman of the common people, and I kinder figgered it might be quite a relief for a feller like that to find out that this aint the case at all, and nobody would ever confuse him for a minute with Mark Twain or Mr. Dooley, and as for the common people, most of them I ever talked to think he is really pretty much of a Snob.

So that is why I am writing to you, Will, of course I dont want you to think this aint just a friendly little letter, I am being just as Friendly and good-natured and loveable as you was to Al Smith, or to the Prince of Wales before you met him. I only thought it would be mighty nice for you to hear some familiar home talk for a change.

Course I may not always remember to spell my words wrong, but that shouldent mean I

aint being just as quaint and homespun as you are. Just because my grammar is sometimes right, or I forget to put an e in shouldent, dont you think my Heart aint in the right place or I aint only kidding you just in fun, like you kid everybody else.

Well, I was glad to see the other day that you was all dressed up in a Cowboy outfit again and endorsing Beechnut gum. I never got around to tell you before, but I think that cowboy outfit was a swell idear. People know that a feller from the great Open spaces he wouldent do anything petty or mean, and so when you write a piece about how Cal is stingy or Mr. Edison is deaf or how Al Smith has a funny accent, why people just put it down to how Cowboys act.

Because you see, Will, we know about Cowboys in the East here, too. In the East we got a kind of a local cowboy, he don't exactly swing a rope like you, but otherwise he is just the same. This Cowboy we got here is usually found standing in front of a drug store, or on the corner, and when the girls walk by he whistles There She Goes, There She Goes, All Dressed Up in Her Sunday Clothes, and everybody laughs. This

Drug Store Cowboy usually has got quite a reputation as a wit, in fact, because whenever anybody walks by him he always makes some wisecrack about them out loud, and all the crowd hanging around him laugh so he wont make no crack about Them after they have gone.

Only there is just one Difference. This kind of Cowboy has got sense enough not to write down what he says for it to ever be read. He knows that cracks about people walking by sound funny when you make them out loud, but when you write them down they aint quite so funny, in fact they are kind of Sad, and he wouldent want people to find out that he was maybe just a boor who got his laughs by being Rude.

Now Will, I dont want you to think you aint funny, sometimes you are as funny as this other Cowboy. Course you know what you are doing, you been advising Presidents and Kings and Congress and Mussolini so long that you should ought to be able to advise yourself, but if I was you, Will, if I was you I'd do like that other Cowboy. I'd realize that these cracks you make about people aint really literature, they are just

cracks, and I'd stick to the Stage. As a comic writer you are a good vaudeville Actor.

Now I don't want you to get sore at what I am saying to you. Will, I mean it for your own good, I am trying to Help you like you have helped Al Smith and Coolidge at one time another. Now I know it has worried you how critics aint been nicer about what you Write, it is because we are very fond of you and we kinder hate to see you wasting your time with Literature when you might still be known as a funny feller with a Rope, like when you first started on the Stage. I can remember when you first started, Will, you was being natural then, that was before you begun to write and get took up by Society.

Not that we aint very proud of you Will. We like to see you getting ahead in Society so well. Besides it is very flattering when you keep on pretending you are just one of us Common People, and go around Europe chewing gum and acting like Just Folks, when all the time you are hobnobbing with Kings and Princes and people that Matter. We are mighty glad you got so

WILL ROGERS

In his familiar chaps and two-gallon hat, America's Drug Store Cowboy loiters as usual at the corner of Main Street and Park Avenue, his long lariat mouth uncoiling slowly as he drawls a few homely observations for the *Times* (each in a little worse taste than the last), calls all the passing celebrities by their first names, offers his advice to every one free for what it is worth, and pursues his daily racket of "jes' bein' common folks" in what he firmly believes to be the best tradition of Mr. Dooley and Mark Twain.

RD HALL
HO

many nice friends, every time we read one of your articles we realize how many Important people you know, I guess nobody practically gets onto the Front page that you don't know him in a day or two, usually by his first name.

We like to see you get ahead like that, Will, and if it helps you to pretend that you are just a Regular feller like the rest of us, so you can call Alice Longworth Alice or play polo with the Prince, why that's fine. We are always glad to read in *The Times* that you just been to dinner with Henry Ford, or flew in a plane with Lindy, or done a little favor for the Hoovers, that's real nice to see you stepping out so well in Society. We know what a big Kick you get out of it, it dont fool us none when you say you are Democratic, but that only makes it all the funnier. I told you I dident want you to think you aint funny, because you are.

Only I just wish you wouldent try to be funny in print. I wish for example you wouldent write a book like Ether and Me, although I got to admit the title of that book is a pretty good suggestion how to read it.

There now, you see, Will, thats the kind of a

nasty crack I was talking about, thats the kind of a crack where it wouldent have hurt if I'd made it out loud, but when I come to write it down just now it sounded pretty mean. Shucks, Will, you ain't mean.

Well I got to run along, its been real nice to have this friendly little chat and let you know how a lot of us here in America feel about you. You got a lot of friends here that like to see you get up on a Stage and do rope tricks and make wisecracks out loud. But when it comes to writing, if I was you I'd stick to chewing-gum endorsements and let any other Literature alone.

Yours, JOHN RIDDELL.

CHAPTER V

ALL QUIET ON THE MIDDLE-WESTERN FRONT

(Monday, April 1; 12:04 p. m.)

As Vance ceased reading, the dread remorselessness of the tragedy shocked us all into silence. After a moment a choked whistle escaped Heath; and Markham threw back his head like a man shaking himself out of an encroaching spell of hypnosis. It was Vance who first recovered himself sufficiently to speak.

"It is becoming increasingly apparent," he began, "that we are dealing with an extr'ordin'rily clever plot—something that has been thought out and planned down to the minutest detail, and elaborately covered up at every point. Everything has been staked—even life itself—on the outcome. Only a supreme hatred and an exalted hope could have inspired these crimes. And against such attributes, d'ye see, the ordinary means of prevention are utterly useless. I fear there'll be more—many more——"

A hoarse shouting in the street burst in upon

our morbid silence. Above the hum of traffic, the hoarse calls of "Uxtra! Uxtra!" reached our shocked ears. With an ominous groan, Heath crossed rapidly to the window and flung it open.

"Hey, sonny!" he shouted. "What's all the excitement?"

"Big Chicago murder!" yelled the newsboy. "Reee-dabout tha *big* Chicago massacreee! Eight killed, many wounded! Hee-yare!"

"Who was killed?" shouted Heath.

"Burnett, an' Hammett, an' Edward Sullivan," replied the boy, as he retreated down the street, "an' Charlie Coe, an' Mackinlay Kantor, and Cormack, an' Maurine Watkins! Hee-yare! *Worlamericanews* 'n' *Mirrrr!* Uxtra . . ."

"How was they killed?" Heath bawled after him.

"Reee-dallabout tha *big* Chicago Massacreee," came the dwindling voice of the newsboy. "Many foun' stabbed t'rough de heart . . . lyin' in de streets . . . each wearin' a rubber-soled . . ."

"WHAT?" howled Heath, leaning far out the window.

"Hee-yare," the voice floated back mockingly, "*Worlamericanews* 'n' *Mirrrr* . . . uxtra . . ."

"What did he say?" demanded Markham impatiently.

"I couldn't make out, sir," admitted Heath. "It sounded like each was wearin' a rubber-soled tennish you——"

"Could he have been saying 'a rubber-soled tennis shoe'?" suggested Vance significantly.

"My God, Mr. Vance," said Heath. "It *did* sound like that, now you mention it! But surely you don't think——"

"I don't know what to think, Sergeant," admitted Vance frankly. "There is a grim possibility—but no! Dash it all—it everts my pet theory!"

"So you have a theory." Markham spoke rebukingly.

"Did not those names signify anything to you, Markham?" countered Vance.

"I can't say I recognized them," replied Markham dubiously.

"Perpend, then," began Vance. "Burnett is doubtless W. R. Burnett, the author of 'Little Cæsar,' a Chicago gang story. Hammett is

Dashiell Hammett, who wrote that other Chicago gang story, 'Red Harvest.' Edward Sullivan is the author of 'Rattling the Cup on Chicago Crime,' another Chicago story. Charles Francis Coe's 'Hooch' predicted almost word for word the very Chicago massacre of which we have just heard. And the others are equally middle-western: MacKinlay Kantor, the author of 'Diversey,' a Chicago story; Bartlett Cormack, who wrote that thrilling play about Chicago called 'The Racket'; Maurine Watkins, the author of 'Chicago'——"

"Stop!" cried Markham, passing a hand before his eyes. "It is too much!"

"Precisely," said Vance. "Much too much! Sooner or later it was only natural that so many Chicago novels would conflict with one another. Inevitably they were bound to exterminate each other in the end."

"But how do you link a group massacre out in Chicago with the present Riddell case?" asked Markham weakly.

"I think I can suggest a clue to that," I interposed suddenly. "Have any of you gentlemen noticed this book in Riddell's own lap?"

The corpse shot me a distinctly dirty look, and reached petulantly for another book from the table.

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Vance. "Here it is—to be sure——"

He adjusted his monocle.

" 'All Quiet on the Middle-Western Front,' " he read. He skimmed the pages thoughtfully. "Evidently the author, envious of the fact that Germany has written what is obviously the greatest novel of the War, has endeavored here to emulate Herr Erich Maria Remarque by writing in turn The Great American War Novel. And what more appropriate than that he should select as the most obvious location in America for his battle-front—*Chicago!*"

"Go ahead," urged Heath hoarsely. "We'll follow you."

Vance cleared his throat and commenced reading gently:

ALL QUIET ON THE MIDDLE-WESTERN FRONT

We are at rest five blocks behind the front. Yesterday we tapped Casa Alvarado, and now

our bellies are full of spaghetti and Italian wine. There is to be an extra large split; we have not had such luck as this for a long time. The boss is begging us to take more money; he beckons to every one that passes, and hands him out a great dollop. He does not see how he can empty his money-bags before the next hold-up.

Fourteen days ago we had to go up to the Loop and relieve the front line. It was fairly quiet in our district, though there was heavy firing to the north and south; but on our way home from the Casa Alvarado affair Pete Montana opened up on us with an astonishing number of machine-guns and high explosives, drumming ceaselessly on our position, so that a Police Captain and several dozen pedestrians were lost.

Last night we moved back to Sam's Club Palermo and settled down to get a good sleep for once: Otero is right when he says Chicago would not be so bad if only one could get a little sleep.

It was noon before our gang formed a queue at Sam's office. Head of the queue, of course, was Rico, Sam's lieutenant, the clearest thinker

among us; Tony Passa, scarcely twenty years old; Otero, the Greek; and the fourth, myself, Riddell the informer. All four joined up with the same gang as volunteers for the war. We were getting impatient, for Sam Vettori paid no attention to us, but went on counting money.

Finally Joe Mascara called out: "Hurry up with that dough, Sam. There's going to be a bombardment."

Vettori still took no notice. "Why should they bombard us?" he said. "They ain't got nothing on us."

"Rico had to plug Zuroto."

"Zuroto?"

"He was a guy from Charlie Coe's novel."

Sam was quite disconcerted as the facts dawned on him. He was staggered. "Damn!" he cried. "Love of God, Rico, didn't I tell you to stick to the characters in our own story? What will the Big Boy say?"

"I couldn't tell the difference," said Rico sullenly. "All these Chicago novels look alike to me."

"There'll be trouble—" began Sam.

Outside a closed automobile had stopped. A

rain of machine-gun bullets raked the window. Sam took two steps forward, he clutched his stomach, a surprised look came over his face. When anybody fires a gun through Sam, he throws up the sponge altogether; he just goes to pieces. He suddenly slumped to the floor.

Tony was delighted. He winked at Sam's pile of money and said: "I guess he won't be wanting that any more, eh, Rico?"

We all smiled as we crowded around Sam's plate, ducking the flying lead and dividing the rest of Sam's money. We have lost all sense of other considerations here. Only facts are real and important for us. And good money is scarce.

But Rico stared moodily out the window at the pelting bullets. He mused: "Sam was right. There'll be trouble."

Here in Chicago we have lost all sense of proportion. We all belong to gangs; our business is to kill, to rob, to make war on each other. We are cut off from peace, from prosperity, from progress. We believe in such things no longer,

we believe in the war. We are the Lost Generation.

We discuss it. Tony asks with astonishment:

"Why do we fight each other? Why do we not all lay down our arms to-morrow?"

"Are you really as stupid as that?" growls Otero. "If we did not shoot each other, what would become of this story? Nobody would read so much as a page."

"But what exactly is all the war for?" asks Tony.

"The Big Boy wants it," answers Rico with a slight air of superiority. "Every full-grown Chicago novelist requires at least one gang war, otherwise he wouldn't become famous. You look in your best-sellers."

"True," I assent, "but no Chicago novels at all would be better still."

My opinion is quite typical here, one meets it time and again, and there is nothing one can do about it. It is foolish to talk so. The Big Boys are running the war—here we are. We are only characters in their novels.

Rico lies down on the floor and growls angrily: "There are too many novels already in

Chicago, do you understand, there'll be trouble yet."

Chapter Two:

We have to go up again on firing duty. It is the Big Boy's orders. The black roadster rolls up in the alleyway after dark. We climb in. We stand jammed together, holster to holster, there is no room to sit. Rico is in a good mood for once; he is carrying a new riot-gun; he picks off a bull on the corner of La Salle Street.

Carillo takes a turn on two wheels, the exploded shells in the tonneau leap and rattle. The streets are blown full of holes from a recent bombardment. Occasionally we pitch roughly over a fallen pedestrian. Past us stream the ambulances in long files. They are carrying back the wounded from the centre of the city.

"There must be a couple of other gang wars on to-night," I murmur.

"Charles Walt's crowd is having it out," explains Rico to us.

The air becomes acrid with the smell of powder. The gun-emplacements are camouflaged

behind the tall buildings. The Tribune Tower might seem gay and cheerful were not cannon embowered there. We are not, indeed, in the front line, but only in the reserves, yet in every face can be read: This is Chicago.

It is not fear. Men who live in Chicago must become thick-skinned. Otero shakes his head: "There'll be a bombardment to-night."

Three shells land beside us. The National Bank Building explodes in a burst of flame, the fragments howl and drone. A small file of black figures walk out leisurely, carrying sacks of money. Tony raises his gun.

"Do not shoot them," warns Rico. "They are from 'Diversey.' We must keep these novels separate, or there'll be trouble."

An uncertain red glow spreads along the skyline from one end of the city to the other. It is in perpetual motion, punctuated with bursts of flame from other buildings. Guns and munition wagons are moving along the cross-streets. From within a closed garage comes the familiar *rat-tat-tat* of Coe's machine-gun bullets. Two rival gangs meet on Michigan Boulevard in the last chapter of "Red Harvest," and shoot at

each other until the pages are exhausted. They lie in heaps along the curb.

Rico cautions: "Remember, stick to our own characters."

To me Chicago is a mysterious whirlpool. I cannot understand it. Everywhere there are bullets, bombs, bloodshed, machine-guns, and shells, and more bullets. It is hard to understand how any one can live out there.

Chicago!—Chicago!—Chicago!—

Chicago, with thy gangs, and bootleg feuds, and stick-ups, and murders, and other trite situations into which an incompetent author may fling himself and crouch down! Why do they continue to write of thee? Why do we let them get away with it, one after another? Are they seeking to exterminate each other altogether? Will there be, in time, not one novelist alive from Ohio to Indiana? Will any one give a good damn?

Stop! What madness is this? I must not let myself think this way. No character in a Chicago novel ever allows himself to think. I seize my rod and drop an innocent bystander on the street-corner. By a stroke of luck he was the

very last innocent bystander left in Chicago.

Now only the gangs are left.

Chapter Three:

"Chicago ought to be empty pretty soon," says Rico.

We have given up hope that some day an end may come. We cannot think so far. A man can take a bullet and be killed; but the public can take one novel after another, and still cry for more. The characters are growing emaciated and starved. The artillery is fired out, it has too few situations left and all the plots are worn. Dysentery dissolves our description. We have no new ideas. Our fresh authors are anæmic boys in need of cash, who cannot carry a story, but merely know how to die. By thousands. They understand nothing about writing, they simply go on and let themselves be published and forgotten.

Gangs, bootleggers, murders—another Chicago novel.

More gangs, bigger bootleggers, better mur-

ders—"Red Harvest," "Hooch," "Little Cæsar."

Second serial rights, movie rights, the common grave—there are no other possibilities.

Otero sniffs the air suspiciously. "There'll be a bombardment."

The thunder of the guns swells to a single heavy roar and then breaks up again into separate explosions. Above us the air teems with invisible swift movement, with howls, pipings, and hisses. The dry bursts of the machine-guns rattle. The searchlights begin to sweep the dark sky. A sound of heavier firing approaches.

"Coe's gang," warns Otero. "Now we are in for it!"

Then it begins in earnest. We crawl away as well as we can in our haste. The next bomb lands fair among us. Tony cries out, he has been hit, he is done for. Barrage. Otero falls and lies still, he got it in the stomach. The bricks fly high, the buildings crumple, the cornices fall and the roofs cave in. The crack of the guns is heard long after the roar of the explosions.

Rico places his mouth by my ear during a lull:

"I knew it would happen. There were too many novels here. Sooner or later they all kill each other."

Chicago vanishes, it is exploited, laid barren, written to pieces.

The whole bubble bursts before me. It rains dead authors: Burnett is hurled in the air, he lands in a heap; a shell whistles, Coe and Hammett are thrown on top of him; another whistle, four authors are flung on the heap, I claw for cover, more characters are thrown beside me. I groan, the earth leaps, the pile is mounting, I am the only one left, I see a chance . . . *I will write a novel myself.* . . .

Riddell fell in August, 1930, in a city that was so quiet and still that the critical report confined itself to a single sentence: All quiet on the Chicago front.

He had fallen forward and lay on his face. In his hand were a pencil and a fresh sheet of paper. Turning him over, they saw that he had been in the act of starting the first sentence of another Chicago novel.

They had got him in the nick of time.

CHAPTER VI

HELLO YOURSELF, SHERWOOD

(Monday, April 1; 12:47 p. m.)

As Vance finished reading, Heath rose determinedly and crunched his cigar between his teeth.

"By God!" The grizzled veteran struck the table with his fist. "I never met nothin' like this in all my years of experience on the force. It ain't gonna go on any further, I tell you—not if I can help it." There a sense of utter helplessness tempered his outraged resolution, and two great tears stole down his weatherbeaten cheeks.

"I know how you feel, Sergeant." Vance spoke with troubled discouragement. "But no power on earth can avert another tragedy. This Murder Case must go on. Our only question is: 'Who is next?' "

Instinctively all our eyes turned in anticipation toward the new book in the lap of the corpse.

"Oh, for the Jesus' sake," muttered the

corpse, holding out the book resignedly to Vance, and reaching wearily for another.

Vance lit a *Régie* and opened the volume ominously. Markham peered over his shoulder.

"Sherwood Anderson!" they exclaimed in horror.

With trembling hands Markham snatched the portable telephone from his pocket and lifted the receiver. "Get me Sherwood Anderson," he ordered, "in Marion, Virginia."

"Marion, Virginia?" echoed Heath in a puzzled whisper.

Vance nodded. "Anderson went down there several years ago," he explained, "and bought the local newspaper. Since then he has been living in this little country town, editing the paper and making notes and observations upon the inhabitants. By mingling with them, as he has so often explained, he has been enabled to learn their inner secrets and hear their private affairs, and thus gather interestin' human material for his future books."

"Did the local inhabitants know about him doing this?" asked Heath incredulously.

"I cannot see how they could have helped but

know," replied Vance. "He published all their names and private affairs recently in a book of clippings from his newspaper, entitled 'Hello, Towns.'"

"But didn't they object—?" began Heath.

Markham waved his hand frantically for silence. "Hello? Hello?" He jiggled the hook. "What's that? What?"

He faced us with a puzzled expression.

"They say Anderson's number is discontinued."

"Try the Marion Morgue," suggested Vance ominously.

"Hello!" Markham spoke excitedly. "Hello —is this the Morgue? Have you an unidentified body there by the name of Anderson? What?"

Markham cupped his palm over the mouthpiece and turned to Vance. "All they have is the corpse of a short thick-set man, who was found this morning stabbed through the heart with a long sharp——"

"Ask if he was wearing one rubber-soled tennis shoe," ordered Vance grimly.

"Good Gad! You don't mean—" Markham turned and spoke hurriedly into the receiver.

"Was this victim wearing a rubber-soled tennis shoe—what? *On his left foot?*" His voice trailed slowly. "Thank you . . . that will be all. . . ."

"What's the name of that book, Mr. Vance?" asked Heath.

" 'Hello Yourself, Sherwood,' " replied Vance.

"Let's hear it," said the District Attorney weakly. "God grant there may be some clue."

As Markham and Heath sank down in their chairs before him, Vance commenced to read in a slow, measured voice:

HELLO YOURSELF, SHERWOOD

I am not a writer. I am a writer.

If I were a writer, I would not know what to do with myself. I would sit in a study all day long, like a pansy, catching flies with my hand, or pulling down the shade and letting it run back with a snap, or turning out books like this. I could not write for other people.

"All right, then," I said. "I will let other people write for me." I was driving along a country road in Virginia with the lady "Q." I have to

keep my ladies card-indexed and filed under their initials so that I can keep track of them. I am not a business-man either.

I saw a newspaper office. I went in. "How much is your newspaper?"

"Two cents," he said.

"No, the whole thing. The office, and the typewriters, and the pot of paste, and the free telephone, and the green eye-shades, and the dramatic editor, and all those nice sharp pencils. Do you want to sell it?" He did. "How much?" He told me.

"Too much." Pansies make love among the branches of trees. They do not have to worry about money.

But you are not a pansy.

* * *

I always have this supreme faith about money. I cannot tell where it comes from. When I reach in my pocket I always find something there, such as my hand.

"I am Sherwood Riddell," I told him. "Who?" "Sherwood Riddell." "Diddle?" "No, Riddell." "Riddell?"

"Sherwood Riddell, the writer, you poor damned fool."

"It must be ideal to be a writer," said the editor.

"I am not only a writer," I said, "I am an editor."

He looked at me.

"I have just bought your newspaper."

* * *

That's how it is done.

FIRST WEEK OF JULY

FROM THE PAPER

Your new editor took charge yesterday. He hopes you will all be good and wash behind your ears. He does not want to have to scold.

Your editor's name is Sherwood Riddell. He has bought both the Carrion (Va.) *Republican* and the Carrion (Va.) *Democrat*. These two papers will be combined at once.

They will be known henceforth as "that newspaper Sherwood Riddell bought."

Public Library Notes

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Our library has just been presented with a lot of nice new books by an anonymous donor who particularly requested that we do not mention his name, as he is the editor of a local paper here.

The books which were donated include "Too Many Marriages" by Sherwood Riddell, "Schnappsburg, Ohio" by Sherwood Riddell, and a number of other books by Sherwood Riddell, including all the rest of them.

AN EDITOR'S THOUGHTS

An editor's thoughts—not published.

Terror. These people. Suppose they do not know who I am.

Every week the pages of the paper to be filled. The new editor, who is also a writer, rolls up his sleeves. Blank pages. Space. He has never had so much space before in his life.

The town of Carrion nestles among the spacious hills. "There are all these people walking

up and down the streets. Do they know me? Have they read my books?"

And now he is walking along the street. People are pointing him out. "That is our new editor. His name is Sherwood Riddell. He writes books."

I wonder how they found out?

The New Carrion

AN EDITORIAL

Well, folks, you have a pretty good town here. I just want to suggest a few changes in it, here and there, then everything will be all right. Nothing to worry about.

Life in a town goes on, just so. You know how it is. Spring, summer, winter, fall. People getting married, always the same old thing. Terrible.

Just suppose now, in our town, we are visited by some great man. Suppose one of my friends comes down. Hurrah now, let's give him a big day. The big drum is booming. Boom, boom, big drum. The horns are going. Music. Zipp. Everybody goes down to meet the train at the

railroad station, waving their flags. And no railroad station. Pshaw. What a frost.

The first thing Carrion needs is a railroad station.

They also need a railroad.

I think that while we are at it there are a couple of other changes that might not be so bad. This morning while I was coming down to the office I tripped over the sidewalk in front of the Post Office and barked my shins. I think it would be a very good idea to remove that sidewalk. And perhaps it would also look better if we moved the Post Office over to the other side of the street, under that big elm. The first Presbyterian Church can be shoved up the block a little ways, or else maybe we can squeeze it in the space where the Bank Building is now standing. Folks around here don't really need a bank. Farmers are poor. They don't have any money.

And I think it would also improve the looks of the town if we picked up the old newspapers and cracker boxes that are in the Square before the City Hall, and also built a new City Hall. This present one is terrible. Of course, it's

all *right*. You country people may even *like* it.

The people of Carrion owe it to their town to give it the heartiest kind of support. Get back of it. We, in Carrion, have a corking good newspaper. Let's make the town worthy of it.

SECOND WEEK OF JULY

What jolly fun running a newspaper. I am having the time of my life.

The people in this town—how nice they are. When I walk past them on the street they stand back at a respectful distance. They let me pass.

They are very quaint. Real local characters. I think I shall write a book about them. Very easy.

I wonder why no one ever thought of doing this before.

Mr. Stoop's Black Eye

NEWS

Mr. T. Llewellyn Stoops, of 67 South Hickory Street, is the victim of a badly discolored optic this week, having received same last night. He reports his right eye is doing nicely. It is his left one that was hit.

Mr. Stoops says he got up to go into the bathroom, and the door was open, and when he leaned over to pick up a penny he had lost, the handle of the rake flew up and he was kicked by a horse.

These things will happen.

Looking to the Future

AN EDITORIAL

You people in this town are very quaint. Your editor is very fond of you. He likes to make notes about you for his books.

People in a small town are sometimes real characters.

You say very funny things. You are good copy.

Already your editor has gotten a lot of stories about the people in this town, and he will write them, and publish them in some big magazines up north. Won't you be proud?

And later he will run them here in his newspaper so you can all see them.

You people of this town should get behind your newspaper. Your editor is behind you. Now if the newspaper could only get behind the

editor, and we all crouched down, what a swell game of leap-frog we could have together.

Discord

A STORY

It was dark. He was coming home alone. The man was coming home alone.

He came to the door of his home, 67 South Hickory Street, and he took out his key. Such a time. He could not find the lock. That is, he could not find *which* lock. There were between one hundred and seventy-five and two hundred locks on that door. You know how it was. Besides, he had the wrong key anyway.

He knocked at the door.

He said: "Oh, Ethel dear."

His wife, Mrs. Stoops, opened the door. "Llewellyn!"

Years of bitterness welled up within her. Years of struggle. Years of pain. No, tears of pain. Tears of pain and bitterness. Why had he stayed so late? Where had he been? "Where have you been?" "Nowheres, m'dear." "Oh, yeah?"

Years of desertion. That time he was playing the swell blonde, for example. Sometimes he didn't come home for a week at a time. Said he was working at the office. "I've been working late at the office, dear, and I won't get home to-night." Sure, sure. A likely story. She thought of that, too.

"Let me in, dearest."

He had been drinking. She could smell his breath. Suddenly she hated him. Her fist swings out. She hits him.

Then they go inside.

God knows, God knows.

THIRD WEEK OF JULY

More Improvements

AN EDITORIAL

Several people have complained about the name of the town here, which is called Carrion. "Do you like the name?" they asked.

I said no. "No, I don't." "Neither do I."

I have decided to change the name.

I have decided that from now on we will

simply call the town Sherwood Riddell. This is shorter, and easier to say, and in addition it makes it much easier for my friends to address my letters. They just have to put a ditto. It saves ink. Ink costs money.

I also think it might be nice if we moved the town over to the other side of that big hill. As it is, I don't get the morning sun at all.

Sunshine is the greatest medicine in the world.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

67 South Hickory Street,
Carrion, Va.

Editor *Republican-Democrat,*
Carrion, Va.

Dear Sir: I seen your little story deporting to describe my affair with my wife which never took place, and wherein I got my black eye, also contusions which you did not so much as mention in your esteemed paper, and I would beg leave to state that the entire story is false and has made a hell of a lot of trouble, and you damned old snoop why can't you mind your own business. Respectfully,

T. Llewellyn Stoops.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

His bleeding heart about to break (into print) with pity for the bewildering folly of mankind, our literary Peeping Tom fits his eye once more to his neighbor's keyhole. Perhaps this time he will surprise the great secret: Why Do They Do It? Perhaps he will only uncover another nice spicy item of small-town scandal for his Marion (Va.), newspaper.

AN EDITOR'S THOUGHTS

Hot diggety!

I have been going ahead fine with those Small Town Notes I have been writing. Most of them have appeared already in "Vanity Fair" and elsewhere, and I just heard they are going to put them into a book.

Me. A book. Can you imagine?

In the meantime I shall publish them here in my paper. They are making quite a sensation. I have published a couple more about the town judge, and the local doctor, and I have a swell story about Miss Sarah Bleepley, the town milliner, which I am collecting notes on right now. I go out at night with my notebook, and take a walk around and make these notes about things, about people.

You can find out lots of interesting things in a small town.

COURT NEWS

Divorce proceedings were filed to-day by Mrs. Llewellyn Stoops against her husband, Llewellyn Stoops, of 67 South Hickory Street,

in this city. Mrs. Stoops charged her husband with infidelity and cited a story which was published in the local newspaper here, describing Mr. Stoops' affair with a swell blonde. Mr. Stoops had nothing to say which could be printed.

Sarah Bleepley's Lovers

A STORY

She was only the town milliner.

She was plain, nay, ugly. Her hair was stringy. Her shoes sagged at the heels. She had no appeal for men.

But men came. Night after night men came to visit her house. There was a different man almost every night. There was the town banker last Thursday. Yesterday there was the minister.

What do they see in Sarah? neighbors asked.

Her dining-room window is on a level with the street. Once she forgot to lower the shade. She was sitting in the lap of the local grocer, in her chemise, with her arms around his neck. He was kissing her.

Is this the Sarah we know? people asked. They wondered what her secret was.

"Sarah, I love you," said the grocer. He had forgotten his wife, his children, his home. She had charmed him like a Lorelei. "I love you not for your charm, not for your beauty, God knows. I love you because——"

People stood on tiptoe.

Then he noticed that the shade was up, and he pulled it down. No one knows why the town grocer loves the milliner. It is just life.

Shooting on Main Street

NEWS

A dramatic shooting occurred to-day in the office of the Carrion (Va.) *Republican-Democrat,* when an unknown person or persons fired the contents of a double-barrelled shotgun through a window at the person of the Editor, Sherwood Riddell. Fortunately the editor was not hurt, having ducked behind a copy-boy in the nick of time.

It is not known what prompted this mysterious assault.

Those under suspicion include the town grocer, the town banker, the minister, the fire department, the local Y. M. C. A., the Carrion Band, and Mr. Stoops.

Inasmuch as the town judge and the entire police force are also under suspicion, there will be no investigation.

FOURTH WEEK OF JULY

FROM THE PAPER

Your editor wishes to announce that his new book, "Goodbye Towns," will be published tomorrow. A copy will be presented to the Public Library by an anonymous donor.

The book is a collection of the stories which have been published in this newspaper, and will also contain several new stories which have never appeared previously in print. There will also be some amusing photographs of the local fauna.

The book will probably be over the heads of you farmers, but you might like to look at the pictures.

TOWN MEETING

There will be a mass meeting of all citizens to-morrow in the Village Square, T. L. Stoops announced. The subject of this meeting is not known.

Public Library Notes

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Our Library has just been presented with an autographed copy of a new book. The title of this book is "Goodbye Towns" by Sherwood Riddell. Sherwood Riddell is also the Editor of the local paper here. The book was in great demand at once.

A Humorous Incident

NEWS

One of the most amusing parties in some weeks was held yesterday, when the editor of the local newspaper, a Mr. Sherwood Riddell, was tendered a surprise farewell by the entire township of Carrion. Mr. Riddell was dressed very simply in a becoming suit of tar and feathers. After the celebration he was escorted to the

edge of town on a rail, amid the best wishes of all his former friends and associates for a speedy journey.

As a parting gift Mr. Riddell was presented with a copy of his book and a one-way ticket to New York.

A good time was had by all.

FROM THE PAPER

FOR SALE: One slightly used newspaper. Can be remodelled to suit. Former owner will sacrifice same at low price, owing to unforeseen complications which have arisen. Address Sherwood Riddell, New York. *Advt.*

CHAPTER VII

WHAT DO *YOU* DEDUCE?

(*Monday, April 1; 1:28 p. m.*)

"What do you make of it, Vance?" Markham's voice was taut.

Vance tapped a *Régie* on the cover of the book he had just finished reading, and then placed it absently between his lips. He glanced at us thoughtfully over the flare of the match.

"I see in this whole affair," he began, "a carefully worked out plot that's been in preparation perhaps for years. We're dealing with the persistency of an *idée fixe,* and with the demoniacal logic of insanity. And—what is even more hideous—we're confronted with the perverted imagination of a fantastically romantic mind. We're pitted against a fiery, egocentric, hallucinated reader, whose prejudices include Tully and Rogers and Sherwood Anderson——"

"Hell, Mr. Vance!" Heath was growing uneasy. "You're trying to make this case—well, include all the best-sellers of the past year."

"Can you make it anything else, Sergeant? Already there have been thirteen murders, and we're only at"—he glanced down swiftly—"at page 124. Heaven only knows what author will be left intact by the time our book is completed."

Markham drew himself up disconsolately, and rested his elbows on the table.

"Well, what's to be done? That, I believe, is the business of this conclave." He forced himself to speak with matter-of-factness. "Certainly we can't assign a separate bodyguard for every remaining author in America."

"No; and we can't give 'em the works at the police-station, either," grumbled Heath.

"It wouldn't help you if you could, Sergeant," said Vance. "There's no third degree known that could unseal the lips of the person who is executin' this particular *opus*. There's too much fanaticism and martyrdom in it."

"Isn't this a new book in Riddell's lap?" interrupted Markham, glancing curiously at the corpse. "I suggest that we look it over. Perhaps —who knows—it may furnish us with the very clue we are seeking."

He took the book casually from the clinging fingers of the silent figure in the chair. The corpse glanced at the rest of us appealingly, then reached out wearily for another book from a nearby shelf, and crossed its legs again irritably. Markham stared at the title page with a puzzled frown.

" 'What Do *You* Deduce?' " he read. "Seems to be some sort of game book."

"Amazin'," murmured Vance, taking the volume from him with interest. "This tome would seem to be another effort in the style of those Baffle Books and Murder Books which have been so popular at dull dinner parties during recent months. They are the latest development of the epidemic of Cross-Word Puzzles, Character Analysis, Twenty Questions, 'What'll We Do Now?' and other social devices for ruining an otherwise happy week-end."

"I don't understand," said Heath. "How do you work these here Baffle Books?"

"The rules are very simple, Sergeant," explained Vance. "From a book entitled 'The Baffle Book' or 'Murder,' containing twenty or thirty unsolved mysteries, your hostess selects

a particularly sanguinary slaughter, reads aloud to all the guests the gory details, displays a ground-plan of the library where the crime took place, and then hands each victim a pencil and paper. All he has to do is put two and two together and find out who murdered the Duchess. The correct answers are printed upside down in the back of the book; and after he has written down his theories, he can compare his solution with the correct one, and rate his detective ability according to an elaborate system of credits."

"Surely the presence of such a book in this library is more than a little significant, Vance," urged Markham solemnly.

"I suggest you read it," agreed Heath. "Maybe there's a clue."

With a courteous nod to his audience, Vance cleared his throat and began:

WHAT DO *YOU* DEDUCE?

Preface

The following Deduce Book contains several knotty problems for the reader to solve. Read the text of each mystery carefully and consider the questions you are asked at the end of it. Observe the clues, deduce, rea-

son—*don't guess or jump to conclusions.* When you admit yourself completely baffled, then turn to the Answer Section at the end of this chapter.

The correct solutions are all printed upside-down on pages 140 and 141.

No. 1

THE CURIOUS DEATH OF DR. McVEEDIE ARNTZ

The murder of McVeedie Arntz, M.D., a prominent dental physician residing on West End Avenue in New York City, must always rank among the most bizarre mysteries in the annals of American crime. Who committed the dastardly deed and why it was committed will present the reader, as it did Detective Reasonably, with several knotty problems in the intricate art of crime detection.

It is seldom that a toothbrush has been an important factor in the solution of a vexing murder mystery; but it is probable that no toothbrush ever had *less* to do with a murder than the toothbrush found hanging in the bathroom of Dr. McVeedie Arntz, who was later discovered lying in his library, his body punctured by a quaint Oriental dagger, three bullets

FIND THE MYSTERY!

A New and Even *More* Fascinating Game
for Adults Interested in Such Things

Solution to Case No. 64

THE ATROCIOUS MURDER OF EBENEZER FROBISHER, BART.

1. Isabelle La Rue murdered Ebenezer Frobisher in his library with a small blunt instrument, like a pencil sharpener. (*Credit 3.*) She escaped up Fifth Avenue on a bicycle, throwing the police off her trail by putting the tires on backwards, thus giving the effect of going in the opposite direction. In order to confuse them even further, she also wore snowshoes (Spalding's). (*Credit 2.*)
2. The body of Frobisher was strapped to the handle-bars, and passersby on the Avenue thought nothing of it at the time, except perhaps to wonder why Frobisher was not wearing his bicycle-clips. His body was passed through an open window of the Union Club and deposited in a chair, where it was not discovered till three months later and then by a non-resident member. (*Credit 5.*)
3. The murder was committed by Isabelle in defense of her virtue. (*Credit Isabelle.*)

You Now Have All the Solutions to Case Number 64.

WHAT WAS THE MYSTERY?

buried in his heart, and his head completely severed from his shoulders—dead.

The unfortunate physician was discovered at 5:41 a. m. on Tuesday by his housekeeper, Mrs. Tillie, lying on his stomach in the centre of the carpet; but in her subsequent report to the police Mrs. Tillie explained that she had assumed he was merely looking for four-leaf clovers, of which he was very fond, and that she had had no idea that he was dead. Her belief that he was not dead was further strengthened by the fact that the Doctor had risen on one elbow as she entered the room and said distinctly: "You may go now, Mrs. Tillie." Three days later, at precisely 7:20 p. m., the butler, Meadows, happened to glance into the library and noted that the rest of the body was as Mrs. Tillie had described, *but that the head was missing*. His suspicions were aroused, and he summoned the police at once.

The fact that the head of Dr. Arntz was nowhere to be found pointed emphatically to the theory of suicide, and local police were ready to dismiss the case when Detective Reasonably of Scotland Yard arrived on the scene. Detec-

tive Reasonably disposed of the suicide theory at once by discovering, clutched in Dr. Arntz's left hand, a torn half of a woman's lace handkerchief with the initial "F," which proved that it was a case of downright murder. His conclusion was subsequently strengthened by the discovery of a note in Dr. Arntz's pocket stating: "This is not suicide, but a case of downright murder. McV. Arntz, M.D."

The detective then proceeded to investigate more thoroughly the library in which the tragedy—if tragedy it be—occurred; and he discovered several important items which bade fair to throw some light on the case. In the first place, the large grandfather's clock on the mantel had stopped precisely at 11:48 on Wednesday, the day *after* Mrs. Tillie first noticed the body lying on the carpet. Moreover, among the charred ashes in the fireplace, Detective Reasonably came upon three scraps of paper which, when fitted together, proved to be a section of a torn circular for the Book-of-the-Month Club, containing on one side a partial list of the advantages of membership in this organization, and on the other side the upper half of a por-

trait of Heywood Broun. Mr. Broun, it may be said, was later fully exonerated by the police.

Finally the detective discovered on the highly waxed floor of the library the unmistakable tracks of a pair of roller-skates, which led from the low French windows to the fireplace, thence to the body of the slain dentist, and thence twice around the library table in the form of a figure "X" and straight to a clothes closet, where they abruptly ceased.

With the help of another detective, Reasonably forced open this clothes closet, and discovered inside it a woman who gave her name as Frieda, and who could offer no reasonable explanation of how she happened to be in there, except that she was waiting for a trolley car. In her left hand she clutched the torn half of a lace handkerchief, similar to the lace handkerchief clutched by Dr. Arntz, and in her right hand a revolver from which exactly three bullets had been emptied. In addition, she wore roller skates.

With these facts at his disposal, Detective Reasonably was able to identify the murderer of Dr. Arntz. Had you been Detective Reason-

ably, what would you have done? The questions to be answered are:

1. Who was the murderer of Dr. Arntz? (*Credit 3.*)

2. How did Detective Reasonably reach this conclusion? (*Credit 7.*)

No. 9

THE THEFT OF THE EAST TWITCHERLY FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Probably no mystery case in recent years has proven more spectacular than the daring theft, in broad daylight, of the First National Bank of East Twitcherly. Although bank robberies have featured police records for some time, the East Twitcherly crime is unique in that it is the first case on record in which the robbers stole not only the contents of the bank, but the bank itself. How would you explain the baffling mystery?

On the morning of January third, the citizens of Tuppence, Vermont, were aroused by the sight of a stranger passing through town with

a suspicious limp. They did nothing about it, however, and the stranger disappeared. He was never heard from again.

In the meantime, however, the police of East Twitcherly, Nebraska, received an excited telephone call one morning three weeks later that the First National Bank on Main Street was missing. Upon investigation it was found that the bank had been stolen and that the President, a Mr. Peters, had likewise disappeared.

The First National Bank of Twitcherly was a handsome two-story building in the Grecian style, composed of red brick and flanked with four marble columns made of cement and weighing four tons each. It faced directly on Main Street, two doors from the corner of Juniper Street. On one side of the Bank Building was an Atlantic and Pacific Tea Store, and on the other side was a small Pet Shop owned by a man named Harry Geebs and containing, in addition to the owner, a number of dogs, cats, marmosets and goldfish. He also repaired Irish Mails.

The robber, or robbers, had done his, or her, job well. In place of the missing Bank they had

sought to avert suspicion by substituting an uncanny imitation of the original building, which was likewise in the Grecian style, two stories high, composed of red brick and flanked by four marble columns made of cement and weighing four tons each; but instead of the familiar sign over the door "First National Bank," this clever reproduction bore the legend "Whale Blubber Bought and Sold." Inasmuch as there was little call for whale blubber in East Twitcherly, either to buy or to sell, the robbers were in no danger of being disturbed by inquisitive customers. Of the original bank building there was not a trace.

At the time of its mysterious disappearance the First National Bank had contained over four thousand dollars in nickels, in addition to a number of blank checks which could of course be filled out by the criminals at their leisure. After considering the matter thoroughly Sergeant Runkle, who was called in on the case, came to the conclusion that the motive of the robbery was theft.

The clerk in the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Store was instantly freed of all suspicion when it was learned that he had been employed for-

merly as an usher in Roxy's Theatre; and consequently the finger of the law pointed to the proprietor of the Pet Shop, Harry Geebs.

Geebs was a short, stocky man of middle age, with a red beard, who had once been a singing waiter at Tony Pastor's before he was demolished. He vigorously denied all knowledge of the crime, claiming that he had been busy in the back of his shop all night, polishing goldfish. Sergeant Runkle, however, pointed out that instead of polishing goldfish Geebs might just as easily have been digging a tunnel under his store into the vaults of the First National Bank next door. Geebs explained triumphantly that this was impossible, since there was no tunnel; but Sergeant Runkle, not to be outdone, promptly countered by digging one. On the strength of this proof, Geebs was searched, and in his pocket was found a nickel. He was arrested.

A second baffling feature of the case was the prolonged disappearance of President Peters. This mystery was finally cleared up by Mr. Peters himself, *who walked out of the blubber store unassisted four days later.* He could not

explain how he had come to be in there. The few known facts are summarized in his naïve account of the strange affair, which he submitted to the police:

"On the morning of January 24th, I was seated in the vaults of the First National Bank, counting nickels, when three masked men entered, introduced themselves as representatives of the Old Gold Cigarette Company, and asked me if I would consent to a blindfold test. I was rather flattered by this tribute to my prominent position—not to mention the remuneration—and consented to be blindfolded, after which they put a cigarette into my mouth and lit it for me. At the end of four days I began to grow suspicious, so I removed my blindfold and discovered that the rascals had disappeared, taking my keys and, apparently, the Bank."

Acting upon the information contained in this story, Sergeant Runkle was able to arrive at several important conclusions. How would you have reasoned and acted in this emergency? The questions to be answered are:

1. Who was the "Master Mind" of the gang that stole the Bank? (Credit 5.)

2. What was the connection between the stranger in Tuppence, Vermont, and the robbery in East Twitcherly? (Credit 5.)

No. 14

THE WEEK-END MURDER MYSTERY

The cold-blooded murder of Lady Weskit in her palatial home on Long Island evoked considerable consternation among other hostesses, and caused at least two or three similar week-end parties that season to be indefinitely postponed. What would you *have done if you had been a guest that Friday at* Liberty Hall?

Lady Gertrude Weskit was one of the most charming dowagers of the Southampton set, and her week-ends were noted for their lavish entertainments and for the solicitude with which she saw that her guests had a good time. Lady Weskit spared no effort to keep her visitors amused; and riding, swimming, hunting, tennis, golf and indoor sports were only a few of the activities in which the members of the party indulged.

On the night of Friday, March 3rd, Lady Weskit had invited a dozen friends to *Liberty Hall* for "just a quiet little week-end," as she put it. The guests, who looked forward with pleasure to several blissful days idling on the sand, arrived eagerly that evening, and were met at the train by Lady Weskit, who promptly organized a game of charades driving home in the motor. This was followed after dinner by *Twenty Questions,* which lasted until dawn. On Saturday the day was spent in successive rounds of Laddergrams, Guggenheim, *What'll We Do Now?,* Anagrams, and The New Humanism. Early Sunday morning, after three hours' sleep, the guests were roused, fed, and then herded around a large circular table. At the subsequent coroner's inquest the butler, Jenkins, observed that the guests appeared drawn and haggard, and that each of them carried a small, heavy object in his right-hand coat pocket. Furthermore one of them was heard to point out to Lady Weskit in an ominous voice that there were just thirteen of them at the table.

According to the testimony of the butler Lady Weskit ignored this hint, and produced a book

called "The Baffle Book of Crimes to Solve," from which she began to explain the rules of this newest game. This is the last that is known of Lady Weskit. A moment later, in the servants' quarters, the butler heard twelve distinct shots fired in quick succession; and upon rushing back to the scene he found Lady Weskit reclining upon the table in a grotesque position, her hand still clutching the "Baffle Book." On the floor beside her were twelve assorted revolvers, each with a single chamber exploded.

The guests all left for town quietly by the afternoon train.

The question to be answered is:

1. What was the crime? (Credit 10.)

ANSWER SECTION

Correct Solutions to the Three Preceding Cases

THE WEEK-END MURDER MYSTERY

Solution to Case Number 14.

1. The only crime was the fact that they didn't shoot sooner. (Credit 10.)

After diligent search of Geebs' pet shop had failed to reveal the missing bank, he was reluctantly released. President Peters resumed his business in the Whale Blubber Store, which subsequently became known as the Second National Bank. The First National Bank was never recovered.

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in Tuppence, Vermont, and the robbery in East Twitcherly, the name of the town begins with a "T." (Credit 5.)

Solution to Case Number 1.

THE CURIOUS DEATH OF DR. McVEEDIE ARNTZ

1. The murderer of Dr. Arntz was the woman in the clothes closet. (Credit 3.)

2. Detective Reasonably reached this conclusion by looking up the solution in the back of the book. (Credit 7.)

Frieda subsequently confessed to the murder of the dentist. It seems she had come to get her tooth fixed, and he had said to her: "This isn't going to hurt!" She was completely exonerated later by the jury.

The head of Dr. Arntz was never found.

Solution to Case Number 9.

THE THEFT OF THE EAST TWITCHERLY FIRST NATIONAL BANK

1. The "Master Mind" was, of course, Mr. Wu. (Credit 5.)

2. In both the case of the mysterious stranger

CHAPTER VIII

IRON MAN OF MANHATTAN

(Monday, April 1; 2:13 p. m.)

"Well, at least," said Heath, mopping his forehead, "we got through *that* chapter without a murder."

"Don't be too sanguine, Sergeant," replied Vance gloomily. "That may only be due to the fact that nobody knows who the authors of the 'Baffle Books' *were*."

"Surely you must be of the opinion that this dreadful business is almost over," protested Markham. (I almost thought I detected a note of pleading in his voice.)

"On the contrary," replied Vance, "I should not be at all surprised if our cold-blooded murderer presented us with two victims in this present chapter to make up for lost time."

With a cold chill of horror we advanced as one to Riddell. In his lap, confirming our worst fears, rested a new tell-tale volume, its pages held open by the stiff forefinger of the corpse.

As we seized it with gloomy foreboding and bore it to the window, the corpse shot a poisonous glance at our retreating backs, and selected another thick volume from the adjoining shelf.

"W. R. Burnett and Katherine Brush!" Vance read ominously.

"Burnett!" gasped Markham incredulously. *"C'est impossible!* He was killed in that Chicago gang fight only three chapters ago."

Vance nodded.

"But he can't be murdered twice," protested Markham.

"Why not?" demanded Vance. "It's only fair. He's written two books."

In the meantime Markham had snatched the portable telephone from his pocket, and lifted off the receiver with a worried frown.

"What was the second?" persisted Heath.

"It was the brutal, grim and very masculine story of a prize-fighter," replied Vance, "called 'Iron Man.'"

"Hello! Hello," Markham barked into the mouthpiece. "I want Miss Katherine Brush. Hello——"

"And who is Miss Brush?" whispered Heath.

"Katherine Brush, on the other hand," explained Vance patiently, "is the author of the witty, romantic and very feminine story of a newspaper-man, called 'Young Man of Manhattan.'"

"Hello," yelled Markham into the telephone. "Miss Brush—what?—she's been ——?"

He turned and faced us with ashen face.

"Once again we are too late," he announced tragically. "It's all over—just like the rest—long sharp instrument, rubber-soled tennis-shoe, and all."

"Don't despair, old chap," comforted Vance. "Who knows—perhaps we may find the clue to the whole bloody business in the pages of this very book in my hand."

"What's the title of this one?" asked Heath, settling in his chair and lighting his cigar resignedly.

"This book is called 'Iron Man of Manhattan,'" read Vance, "and, if I judge aright, it combines the best features of Miss Brush and Mr. Burnett. In fact, in this story the author seems to have presented none other than the familiar hard-boiled plot of 'Iron Man,' as it

might have been handled by the glamorous pen of Miss Brush."

He adjusted his monocle and commenced reading:

IRON MAN OF MANHATTAN

If Katherine Brush Had Written W. R. Burnett

Perhaps you think of a prize fighter as a bruiser who has two cauliflower ears and who remembers when fights were won in the sixty-third round. You are mistaken. He is usually young. Twenty-five. He is well-dressed; clean-shaven; ex-collegiate in appearance. He parts his hair in the middle. He is always dapper. He usually wears one boxing-glove and carries the other.

He falls in love with ease, calls his girl "Beautiful," and never, even in rainy weather, wears overshoes. He is tall, sunburned, and outdoors-looking. He wears his overcoat collar turned up at the back. He never carries bundles; or wears white socks with dark shoes; or smokes cigarettes through a long holder. He carries a stick

in the city. He does not mix Scotch with ginger ale.

He talks a pictureque lingo, brilliant, staccato, collegiate, and never, *never* employs slang more than two hours old. He is always boiled; diligently boiled. He is handsome; boyish; very very romantic. . . .

He is, in short, the hero of a novel by Katherine Brush.

This is the story of Iron Man. It is also the story of his wife, Rosie, who ran away from her husband before he became famous. It begins fortunately with the last chapter: the night Coke Mason was fighting Rattler O'Keefe.

There was a record crowd that night, if you will recall, packing the Ball Park, milling outside the ticket windows, crowding the upper seats, striking matches in the galleries like intermittent fireflies. It was the sort of crowd that the radio announcer describes as a sea of faces. He tells his audience, brightly, "Well, folks, the crowd looks like a veritable sea of faces. Whenever they strike matches up in the gallery, it looks like intermittent fireflies——"

An excited crowd. And inside the ring the

Iron Man and O'Keefe were standing toe to toe, ducking, sidestepping, swaying, blocking, parrying, back-pedalling, covering—anything but fighting.

"Hell," said Coke Mason, after twenty minutes of this. "We may as well clinch."

They embraced each other wearily. Beyond the ropes were débutantes waving hands with long rosy nails, like petals petrified and lacquered; with sleek sport coats of short-haired fur and extreme upstanding collars; with marcelled hair like pebbles dropped in pools of copper. Over O'Keefe's shoulder-blade Coke regarded with slanting vision a pair of crossed ankles; the sole of one buckled patent leather pump was visible, and the price mark was still stuck in the curve under the thin high heel. Idly he turned his back and buried his face sadly in O'Keefe's right glove. O'Keefe put his arm around Coke and affectionately patted his kidneys with a left.

"Feeling blue, old man?" O'Keefe was attired simply in tights of mulberry-colored silk, embroidered with a single emerald shamrock; his gloves were deep chestnut.

W. R. BURNETT AND KATHERINE BRUSH

Champion of realism, twice conqueror of the Literary Guild, leading contender for the American monosyllabic belt, the hard-boiled and very masculine W. R. ("Iron Man") Burnett stands in the centre of his latest blood-soaked arena, one triumphant glove upraised in victory by the delicate and very feminine hand of Miss Katherine ("Young Man of Manhattan") Brush.

"Life is so futile," Coke sighed.

They walked around the ring together slowly. O'Keefe sympathetically brushed a tear from his opponent's eye with a right uppercut.

"What's wrong, old horse? Tell Rattler."

"Nothing, Rattler." Coke lifted a glistening triangle of sunburn defiantly. "I was just daydreaming of someone, I guess. . . . What do you think of the fight?"

They discussed the fight for some moments. They had been discussing it, in exclusive signed stories, for some weeks past. Anything; to forget Rosie. She did not love him. Why didn't she answer his letters? "Oh, Rosie, my precious, my own, come back to me." Why could he not hold her in his arms again, as he was holding O'Keefe, pumping a series of lefts and rights to the mid-section? Then O'Keefe hooked a right to his jaw, and Coke's eyes clouded with a suspicious moisture. That right to the jaw had brought back the memory of Rosie even more poignantly than before.

Rosie. . . . That night she had left him. He could still see the gray eyes lifted defiantly between lashes that were stiff and straight like

thorns, under a red hat with curling brim and rhinestone buckle; the slim tailored suit of gray *brusque* with fur cuffs and collar; the trim buckled shoes that twinkled down the hall away from him; the shiny pink ovals of polished nails that clutched the handle of her suitcase as she swung it against his jaw. Five years later, whenever he was to be socked on the jaw, he would still be vaguely reminded of Rosie.

They had been so beautiful, so *right* together on their honeymoon; those two incredible children riding side by side on the roller-coaster, clasping each other against the tears of the world. Rosie had cried a little. "It's such fun—I can't *b-bear* it——"

He remembered that she had been wearing a slim tan dress with a brown suède collar, close-fitting brown hat, kid gloves, tan silk stockings and tiny lizard-skin shoes with soles like exclamation-points, as she leaned back and buried her face against his spotted red tie, lavender broadcloth shirt with collar attached, and the lapels of a blue serge suit with faint pin stripe and extra pair of trousers, $39.98. "My sweet." He had stroked her boyish-bobbed hair

comfortingly. "Honey-bunch," he promised. "We'll have each other always—*ever*——"

As he had watched her curling black lashes lift slowly, each individual lash as stiff as a wire, and her magenta mouth open wide—"Your lips are so kissable, honey—" the roller-coaster had dipped suddenly, nauseatingly. Thereafter, although he would never know why, he would always feel a sentimental twinge whenever he was sick at his stomach.

O'Keefe was burying his right fist repeatedly in Coke's stomach now. "Cheer up, Coke."

"It's no use." No; he would tell him everything. Rattler must know everything. He lowered his head; the left-hand lace of O'Keefe's right boxing-shoe had missed the seventh eyelet from the toe. . . . Life was futile. "Life is futile," he said. "I can't go on without Rosie, that's all. I don't care if I lose this fight. I *want* to lose. I'm through, I tell you. I'm through. The Iron Man is through. . . ."

"How about Regan, your manager?" urged O'Keefe, desperately burying his glove in Coke's ribs up to the wrist. "He can help you find her." He hit the Iron Man a reassuring

smash on the point of the jaw. "*He* can help you."

Coke Mason shook his head.

"You can depend on Regan, Coke." He hit the Iron Man another reassuring smash on the point of the jaw . . .

"FOUR!" Lou Magnolia in white flannels with faint blue stripe and a white Oxford shirt open at the neck was bending over him. Coke heard a dim roar. "SIX! SEVEN!" He was being counted out. The Iron Man was being counted out! "EIGHT!" He was licked; through. It was no use. Rosie . . . "NINE ——"

What was wrong? Magnolia had stopped counting. He opened his eyes slowly. Six feet from him horizontally across the ring rose the puckered toes of his own sizable boxing shoes, dusted with fawn-colored resin, looking so masculine and solid; and beside them nestled—cuddled like twin kittens—two tiny green and very feminine slippers, their silver buckles monogrammed with an "R," and a pair of chiffon stockings, like sunburn embroidered with seams, mounting above them to two delicate knees, thence upward to—

"Rosie!"

"I've brought her back to you, Coke!" grinned Regan from the edge of the ring, beside himself with joy. "All is forgiven! She wants you to win!"

Her yellow hair swirled across her head from left to right, between rouged ear-tips laden with jade question-marks. A jewelled T from shoulder to shoulder and down the line of her spine was the back of her Nile-green gown of flimsy *consommé,* and the fulness of her skirt was gathered at her left hip with an enormous butterfly bow of stiff *fin de siècle.* Beneath this she wore a *meringue* of filigree lace and mauve silk that matched the hammered Egyptian *hors-d'œuvre* supporting her filmy stockings, and under this was nothing but a single dainty *casserole* of exquisite shell-pink. All this Coke noted at a glance, from where he was lying.

"Silly," laughed Rosie. "Get up off that canvas and kiss me."

She looked at him between lashes like exquisite etchings on ivory, starry with love. He was still so well-dressed; ex-collegiate in ap-

pearance; dapper. He wore well-fitting six-ounce gloves of mahogany horsehide, gathered to his wrists with just a touch of lace; well-tailored pink tulle trunks which were not too long and not too short, but flared stylishly as they terminated just above the knees; dove-colored socks rolled carefully to his ankles. He rose and clutched her in his arms.

"Congratulations!" cried Rosie. "You've won!"

He turned in bewilderment. O'Keefe lay stretched upon the canvas at the opposite side of the ring, his eyes closed blissfully. Transported with joy at Coke's happiness, the loyal opponent had retired to his corner and quietly dealt himself a right hook flush on the button. Magnolia was raising Coke's arm: "Champeen of the world——"

The gong clanged wildly. Thereafter, whenever Coke was to hear wedding-bells, he would be reminded of this moment.

CHAPTER IX

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CAL SMITH

(Monday, April 1; 2:58 p. m.)

The sudden sharp tinkling of an electric bell shattered the silence which had ensued as Vance concluded his reading.

"The picture slowly clarifies," began Vance, ignoring the interruption. "The fantastic images are gradually taking on the aspect of hideous realities. If my theory is correct——"

The bell continued to shrill insistently.

"The psychological aspects of the situation—" began Vance again.

Once more the bell sounded vigorously.

"I wish that Slink would answer the door," murmured Vance irritably. "This interruption is very annoyin'."

"That doesn't sound like the doorbell to me," said Heath. "It seems more like it was somewhere in this room."

We gazed at each other blankly.

"Oh, my aunt! Of course!" burst Vance. "Markham, old dear! The telephone in your pocket——"

With a look of grim foreboding Markham snatched the portable instrument from his coat and lifted the receiver.

"Hello? Yes, this is the District Attorney speaking.—*What?*" His face assumed a tragic expression. "Stabbed through the heart? When did this happen? Just discovered him, eh! Well, stall the reporters off as long as possible. Of course, I'll be right down. Thank you, Grover!"

He replaced the receiver and turned to us.

"I'm afraid you boys will have to excuse me," he apologized. "A tragedy of national importance has just occurred, which quite overshadows the present case. Indeed, I believe I do not go too far if I state that this event may change the destinies of nations. I have just been informed," he explained impressively, "that Calvin Coolidge was discovered a few moments ago, lying in the study of The Beeches, with a long sharp instrument——"

"Calvin Coolidge!" gasped Heath in awe.

"I must go at once," added Markham, reach-

ing for his hat. "I'll leave you in charge here, Sergeant."

"One moment." Vance appeared to be smoking negligently; but the rapt manner in which he held his *Régie* between thumb and forefinger told me that his brilliant mind was functioning at top speed. "I fear, Markham, that your trip to Northampton would prove more or less in the nature of a wild-goose chase. Unless I am utterly mistaken in my theory, the clue to this tragedy *lies right here in this very library!*"

"Come, Vance!" snapped Markham waspishly. "Surely you do not seriously connect this vicious attack upon our beloved ex-President with the John Riddell murders."

By way of answer Vance crossed the room swiftly and seized the book from the hands of Riddell. The corpse rose in exasperation and strolled sullenly to the window, muttering something to itself about giving a man a chance to read in peace. Vance laid the book open triumphantly on the table.

" 'The Autobiography of Cal Smith,' " Markham read in amazement.

"But Calvin Coolidge—" Heath protested.

"The same thing, Sergeant," explained Vance. "As you know, Mr. Coolidge recently published a best-seller entitled 'The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge.' By an odd coincidence, at about the same time Mr. Alfred E. Smith published his own autobiography under the title of 'Up to Now.' Mr. Smith's book was not a conspicuous success."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said Heath weakly.

"It is very simple," continued Vance easily. "Although some readers claimed that Mr. Coolidge's greater success was due to his superior choice of plot and characters, most critics agreed that his real advantage lay in his simple, homespun 100 per cent American style; and it was frequently pointed out that Mr. Coolidge could doubtless have done just as successful a job *if he had employed the events of Mr. Smith's life instead of his own.*"

"And the book before us?" pursued Markham, a gathering dawn of comprehension in his eyes.

"In 'The Autobiography of Cal Smith,' therefore," concluded Vance, "we find the plot of

'Up to Now' presented as it might have been handled by the author of 'The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge.'"

"Let's hear it, Vance," urged Markham, taking off his hat and sitting down resignedly. "Perhaps, as you suggest, it will furnish us at last with the necessary clue."

Vance adjusted his monocle and began reading:

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CAL SMITH

If Mr. Coolidge Had Written "Up to Now"

It is a very old saying that nothing succeeds like success. The more I see of life, the more I am convinced that the only difference between success and failure is whether you succeed or whether you fail.

Success is what you make it.

While every little boy cannot be the President of the United States, yet it is true that every President was once a little boy. My own experience in this respect did not differ from that of others.

A stitch in time saves two in the bush.

I was born in New York on December 30, 1873. Although I was present at the time, I do not take any credit for this. The first quality in a great man should be humility. I have always felt that it was this quality of humility which first started me on the path which was to lead eventually to the doors of the White House.

The town of New York lies on the westerly shore of the North River, north of the East River and somewhat south of the central part of New York State. This part of the state is made up of a series of narrow streets and high buildings, some of which rank as skyscrapers that must reach an elevation of at least five hundred feet. My grandparents settled here in 1841.

The inhabitants were a hardy, self-contained people, uncontaminated by wicked country ways. They learned diligence and perseverance and fortitude in the clean wholesome air of the city. It was this honest American background from which I derived the diligence and perseverance and fortitude which enabled me to make my way from poor boy to candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

Honesty is the best policy.

My Grandfather Galusha found great amusement in practical jokes, and could entice a man into a nest of bees and make him think he went there of his own accord. My Grandmother, on the other hand, had a comical way of pulling out the chair from under a guest as he was about to sit down. My Great-Aunt Harriet usually contented herself with pulling the wings off blue-bottle flies, though she was not above locking the bathroom door from the outside. My own notions rather ran to dribble glasses and rubber cigars, and I have always felt that these family pranks contributed to me a sense of humor which was to prove invaluable during my subsequent campaign for President of the United States.

My parents then lived in a small tenement at 174 South Street, under the Brooklyn Bridge. Our house was well shaded by tall elevated pillars and the overhanging superstructure of the bridge, and had in front an awning, a little hydrant which was watered carefully every day, and a rambling fire-escape which burst into bloom now and then with gaily-colored mat-

tresses, denim overalls and red flannel underdrawers. Within view were more buildings just like ours, and on the corner was the local saloonkeeper and beyond him the pool-room. This locale was known as the Bowery, and although I think the inhabitants had little realization of its natural beauty, they all loved it because it was their home. The people were of exemplary habits. Their speech was clean and their lives above reproach. The break of day saw them stirring, and their industry continued after twilight. They cherished the teachings of the Bible and sought to live in accordance with its precepts. I often pity the country boy who was not brought up in this fresh and clean atmosphere of the city.

Games never interested me much, though I had some skill with a bat. My mind did not turn toward playing and wasting. We had a number of horse-cars, so that I was able to indulge my pleasure in riding. A horse-car is much company, and riding along the city streets is a good occupation for a boy. Sometimes I visited Coney Island or the beer gardens in Hoboken, but of course I was never permitted to attend the rural

barn-dances or husking bees which were held in the wicked countryside north of New York.

How often during my public career when I was serving my people first as Governor and later as candidate for President of the United States did my mind revert to those clean and wholesome evenings when I would listen innocently to the gentle mooing of the elevated trains overhead or the plaintive piping of a policeman's whistle in the distance.

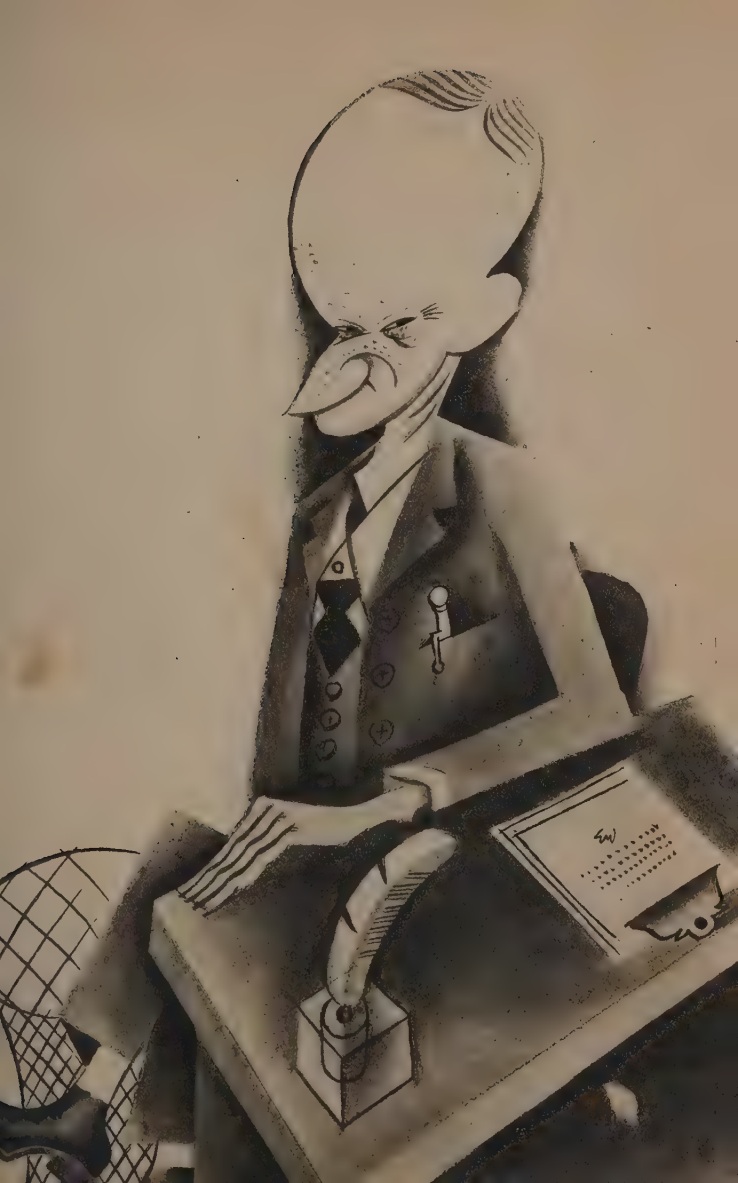
The prevailing dress of our neighborhood was that of the countryside, and although I liked to go barefoot my father always wore a brown derby, which my grandmother knitted for him from homespun woollen yarn. In later years I liked to wear this derby and smoke a fine Havana cigar which my father had always smoked before me. When news pictures began to be taken of me, I found that among the public this was generally supposed to be a make-up costume, which it was not. In public life it is sometimes necessary in order to appear natural to be actually artificial.

It is really quite a paradox.

My father's wages were small, and pressure

CALVIN COOLIDGE

Here at last we see the modest and taciturn author of "The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge," "The History of the United States" (in 500 words), "I Do Not Choose to Run" and other fiction, seated at his plain old-fashioned desk, plotting his next success story: "Silence is Golden; or, From Barefoot Boy to President," written in his simple, homespun, honest, 100% American style.



of necessity, the mother of invention, soon forced me to abandon parochial school and secure a position in the Fulton Street fish market, where they sold fish. Here I worked night and day serving the public, for I realized that fish formed a cheaper food and that it was perhaps partly due to my own efforts that some starving family would eat that night. There were few triflers among the employees. A small number became what we called sports, but they were not looked on with favor, and they have not survived. Nature is inexorable. If men do not follow the truth, they cannot live. Unless men live, they die.

Fish are very clean and wholesome. My contact with fish in the Fulton Market taught me truth, courage, honesty, sincerity, humility, geometry and French.

One very funny incident occurred while I was working in the fish market. There was a man of sound common sense, but without much book-learning, whose occupation it was to weigh the fish. One day he wanted to weigh a haddock, and he asked, "Where are the scales?" Someone replied, "On the haddock." This caused him

to be referred to at times by the irreverent as Old Haddock.

I have always felt that my training in grasping these slippery creatures firmly in my right hand proved invaluable later during my long weeks of handshaking as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

Daisies don't tell.

Without in any way being conscious of what I was doing, I was slowly entering upon a career that was to lead me in time to the doors of the White House. Some unknown power had taken me in charge, and I was embarked upon a public career that was to continue until November 8, 1928, when it was to end by my own volition.

Life is a pretty funny proposition.

While I was working in the fish market I met and married the lady who became my wife. We liked each other, and soon became friends. Today she calls me by my first name.

From counting fish to counting votes was naturally but a step. In the course of time I was elected Governor of the State. Later I was nominated for the Presidency of the United States, a position of responsibility and trust.

Never kiss a buzz-saw.

At the conclusion of my campaign, I counted the votes that had been cast and found that my opponent had received more votes than I had. I took this to mean that it was not best that I should be President, and so I sent a telegram to the other candidate, giving him the election instead of myself. I did not choose to run second.

It was therefore my privilege, after serving my country so many years, to retire voluntarily from the greatest experience that could have come to mortal man. In that way, I believed I could best serve the people and the country which I love.

Arbor day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

As I look back on the path that led from humble origins to high places, I am convinced of the old truth of my Grandfather Galusha that "lives of great men oft remind us, we can make our own sublime." Provided, of course, we write it ourself.

CHAPTER X

LET JOYCE BE UNCONFINED

(Monday, April 1; 3:27 p. m.)

"You know, Mr. Vance," stated Heath, removing the stub of a cigar from his mouth and hunching himself forward in his chair argumentatively, "I was doing a lot of thinking to myself, while you was reading that there book, and I been wondering if we ain't on the wrong track entirely."

"It is quite possible, Sergeant," admitted Vance in a kindly tone. "Even my own astute powers of deduction have been known at times to prove erroneous. But what other 'track,' as you put it, suggests itself?"

"Of course it's only a hunch," apologized the gruff Sergeant, "but it's occurred to me that maybe there was a woman in the case."

"A most int'restin' eventuality," admitted Vance mildly. "That *does* offer a new tail to follow. But how do you purpose to go about unearthing these private *affaires de cœur* in the past of our unfortunate victim?"

"Slink!" replied Heath vindictively. "For some time I been feeling that that sanctimonious old bird knows more than he's telling." He tugged the bell-rope viciously. "If you don't mine, Mr. Vance, I'd liked to put a few questions to him myself."

"I shall attend with pleasure, my dear Sergeant," murmured Vance politely.

A moment later the cadaverous figure of the butler appeared in the doorway.

"Listen, Slink," began Heath threateningly. "Did Riddell ever have any women in here?"

"Mr. Riddell was not without his social side," replied the butler stiffly. "Edna Ferber, and Kathleen Norris, and Ida M. Tarbell, and Fannie Hurst, and Edith Wharton were all frequent visitors to the master's library. I have admitted them here upon occasion myself——"

"That ain't what I'm gettin' at, and you know it," snorted Heath. "What I want to know is: Was Riddell ever in love?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the butler with thin lips. "As to that, I am of course quite unable to say, sir."

"By God, I'll make you answer—" began

Heath, clenching his fist and advancing belligerently.

"One moment, Sergeant," interposed Vance mildly. "Perhaps the worthy Slink will not be averse to informin' us of a few simple domestic facts. For example, was the late Mr. Riddell ever entangled in the holy bonds of matrimony?"

"Only once, sir," replied the butler evasively. "He got divorced again almost immediately."

"Ah! now that's most intriguin'," smiled Vance. "And what, if you recall, was the name of this fascinatin' if fleetin' ex-wife?"

"I only knew her, sir, as Peggy," replied Slink. "She was not here more than a couple of hours, and I had little chance to make her acquaintance, you understand."

"Quite, quite," agreed Vance. "Y' know, that opens up a whole new line of possibilities. *Crime passionel*—most amazin'! Peggy, eh! I say, I wonder if by any chance—but no! The possibility is too remote! Still, it does no harm to try!" He turned to Markham. "Would you be so good as to lend me your telephone a moment?"

He lifted the receiver and gave a vaguely familiar number.

"Did the lady leave any trace behind her?" urged Markham.

"Only her Diary," replied Slink. "I believe Mr. Riddell used to keep the book here in his library. In fact, if I am not mistaken," he said suddenly, "it is that bright-covered volume lying in the waste-basket now."

"A nice touch of sentiment," said Markham, stooping over and lifting out the book with interest.

"Hello—hello—" said Vance, jiggling the receiver.

Markham meantime had been scanning the Diary with interest.

"Who are you calling, Mr. Vance?" inquired Heath suspiciously.

"Hello!" Vance's eyes brightened. "Is this the home of Peggy Hopkins Joyce?"

"My God!" burst Heath. "He knows her, too."

"Hello! I want to speak to Miss Joyce," said Vance. "I say, I want to— What? When? How?" His face darkened. "With a long sharp

instrument—in her own boudoir—?" He replaced the receiver, and turned to us. "I thought as much!"

Markham meantime had been scanning the Diary with interest.

"This may throw some light upon the situation," he said to Vance. "The title of this book is 'Let Joyce Be Unconfined!' "

"Of course—to be sure—" Vance seized the copy eagerly. "A most int'restin' coincidence. As you know, Miss Joyce was the author of a recent volume entitled 'Men, Marriage and Me,' which purported to be a selection of the more inveiglin' of her connubial experiences——"

"Sort of a case of 'You pays your money an' you takes your Joyce,' " suggested Heath soberly.

"Precisely, Sergeant," agreed Vance, adjusting his volume. "And the present volume seems to be written in the self-same manner. Perpend."

The group in the still library leaned forward breathlessly, and listened to Peggy's tell-tale story.

LET JOYCE BE UNCONFINED

Saturday: It is really Sunday but my life really began yesterday when I was brought into the world by old Dr. Marbles, our family physician and the first man who ever held me in his arms, because when a girl is born she cannot do anything but accept strange men's embraces, oh my Diary.

So now I am over twenty-four hours old and on a train going West sixty miles an Hour with old Dr. Marbles, toward my Future.

I suppose I should admit right away that I have married Dr. Marbles, he proposed to me while he had me upside down spanking me and you can understand how a girl in my position could scarcely refuse him. I was still pretty innocent when I was born and I had not had any husbands yet, besides I never guessed that he already had a wife and three children and a flourishing medical practice in Norfolk. He did not tell me this until he had already bought the railroad tickets, and then of course it was too late to do anything about it.

Oh my Diary, I wonder what unbelievable

things are going to be written in your Virgin pages.

Monday: When I was born my parents named me Peggy Hopkins Riddell, after a couple of my future husbands.

Men are as yet an unopened book to me, but I feel I shall get to know them better. I like men very much. There is a young conductor on this car who is tall and dark with blue eyes, for instance, and he tells me I am the most beautiful girl in the world.

As soon as Dr. Marbles is asleep I think I shall go over and ask the young conductor about love. Dr. Marbles is over eighty years old, and he seems to have forgotten a great deal. I could show him a thing or two myself.

Later: Dr. Marbles has just started to snore.

Certain experiences in a young girl's life cannot be written in a Diary, so Peggy does not describe her subsequent conversation with the young conductor, Harry. Her story is resumed the following day.

Tuesday: Oh Diary, so many things have

happened since I wrote in you last. I have married the young conductor with blue eyes. It was this way. When old Dr. Marbles woke up and found me sitting in Harry's lap, he was very angry and threatened to report Harry. But Harry only smiled and said, By the way, I understand from this young lady that you have a wife and three children in Norfolk. Well, Dr. Marbles turned a bright green and swallowed his bridgework, but Harry only said, I have been talking it over with her, and I think she can be persuaded to settle out of court for Two hundred dollars a week heart Balm.

So Harry has given up being a conductor and we are taking a nice apartment in New York City, because he assures me he has no wife or children, to speak of.

Sometimes it seems scarcely possible that I am only a few days old, Diary o' Mine.

Friday: I am so happy here in New York. Harry has taken a job as chauffeur for a very rich millionaire named Mr. Riddell, who is tall and dark and has nice blue eyes. As soon as Mr. Riddell met me he insisted that I and Harry

come live right in his house, so Harry would not have to walk so far, let alone Mr. Riddell. Riddie has been very kind to me, he has taken me to lunch several times and bought me a diamond necklace which is quite a tribute to the wife of your employee.

I told Harry this was quite a tribute to the wife of your employee, but he did not seem very happy about it, sometimes I think Harry is getting unreasonable and I fear I am getting a little tired of him.

After all, Diary, I have been married to him since last Tuesday.

Wednesday: Oh, Diary, Diary, the most wonderful thing! I am going to Paris to-morrow with my husband, Mr. Riddell.

It seems he found out that I and Harry weren't married at all, it was all just a practical joke, so he gave Harry a check for fifty thousand dollars and they had a hearty laugh and Harry went away in the train he used to be conductor of. So Mr. Riddell and I were married that very afternoon.

Mr. Riddell has been so kind to me, he has

bought me pearls and limousines and furs and he has promised to take me to Paris and buy me a divorce.

At this point there ensues a gap in Peggy's diary extending over a considerable period, during which the young girl passes through what is, for a woman, life's greatest experience: her first real Paris divorce. Note the influence her experiences have already had on the young girl's writings. Through the inconsequential phraseology of the child we begin to discern the tremulous, uncertain, at times chaotic thoughts of adolescence.

Monday: I have not written in you much of late, my Diary, because I have been trying to understand Life. As I grow older I get more and more puzzled about myself, and sometimes it seems just impossible that I shall ever get straight. When a girl has as many Husbands as I have, it is no wonder that she gets a little Confused.

In the first place, for instance, I cannot quite see how I could have married Billie last Thurs-

day if Jerry gave me this emerald pendant on Friday. As far as I can remember I must have divorced Jerry way back on Tuesday, because I know I married Paul on a Wednesday. But men do not give girls emerald necklaces after they have been divorced, not unless they have to. It must have been another Jerry.

In the second place, I cannot remember for sure whether I ever got that divorce from Aubrey. I eloped so suddenly with Frank that week-end in Venice that I only had time for one or two divorces, and I cannot remember whether Aubrey's was among them. I hope that he can remember, because I should hate to do anything wicked.

In the third place, I wish I could remember whether Mr. Frankel gave me the Sealyham terrier and Mr. Margolies gave me the Isotta, or whether it was the other way around. It would be very embarrassing to thank Mr. Margolies for an automobile and tell him I was holding his present in my lap while I was writing. I wish men would stick to jewelry, it is much more noncommittal.

These things have been worrying me lately,

I am very sick of men, I think I shall go into a convent. I wonder if you could take a Sealyham terrier into a convent?

But Peggy does not go into a convent. Ziegfeld and Shubert are vying for her, and her fame widens. Her next entry is several years later. In the interim she has acquired an outer shell of sophistication. The entries in her Diary, though still fragile and beautiful, are perhaps a trifle less naïve.

Sunday: I have decided hereafter to keep a filing cabinet of my husbands. It is getting to be more than one girl can remember. It would take all her time.

I decided to do this to-day after a most embarrassing experience. I went downtown this afternoon to get a divorce from my husband, and after I got into the divorce office I found out that in my haste I had neglected to marry him.

I am really getting very tired of men.

Peggy was too busy to write in her Diary for

the following week. But a great deal happened to her in that week!

Monte Carlo, Saturday: Tremendous things have happened, Diary dear, since I wrote about my marriage with Claude.*

The trouble about a Diary is, you forget to write things down as they happen and afterward you cannot remember them properly, especially if you have had more than one husband the same day.

Well, I will try and tell all, but first I must set them down as they happened.

First, I have divorced Egbert. No, that's not first, because I have to remember to tell about marrying Egbert and him buying me all those things—but the most important thing is that *I married George!* George is one of the richest men in Boston, and he is tall and dark and has blue eyes.

Second, I have divorced George and married Bobbie. I am *wild* over him and we are on the Paris express for our honeymoon. Bobbie

**There is no previous mention in Peggy's Diary of her marriage to a Claude, nor does it occur again. He probably knew nothing whatever about it.*

thinks I am the most wonderful woman in the world, he has given me the loveliest tiara and perfume and other trinkets and we are going to be very happy together.

Third, there is the nicest man I ever saw sitting right across the compartment from me, he is tall and dark with blue eyes and his face is vaguely familiar, and while Bobbie was getting a drink of water he leaned across and took my hand all trembly and he said: Babe, I want you to be my wife, will you?

Fourth, I have decided to divorce Bobbie.

Isn't it *marvellous?*

The honeymoon with Bobbie pursues its usual course, and Peggy is divorced when they arrive in Paris. Note that the girl is still but sixteen, sweet and unspoiled. At this juncture there occurs an event which is to color her entire view of men.

Biarritz, Friday: I hate men, I hate them, I hate them, and I am through with them forever. Oh, how I hate them!

I think I shall go into a convent.

After I got my divorce from Bobbie I was married right away to the blue-eyed stranger across the aisle, and after we had spent a couple of beautiful days in Biarritz I asked him his name.

My name is Riddell, he said. What is your name, Babe?

Oh you brute, I wailed, my name is Peggy, and *you were my first husband.*

Not the same Peggy, he exclaimed, sweet God.

Well, I was perfectly furious at having wasted three whole days, I said to him, Look here, life is too short for me to be always marrying the same man over and over. I'm having trouble enough marrying each man *once* without accommodating repeaters.

But I didn't recognize you until just now, apologized Mr. Riddell, when I happened to glance up and notice your face.

Well, if a man can't remember who he's married, I said, I don't see how you can expect the girl to. I've never been so insulted in all my life.

So I got up then and there and ran out into the aisle of the train and married the conductor.

Later: I have just found out that the conductor is Harry.

I wonder if they have any good convents with garage and running water?

CHAPTER XI

THE UP-SET

(Monday, April 1; 4:14 p. m.)

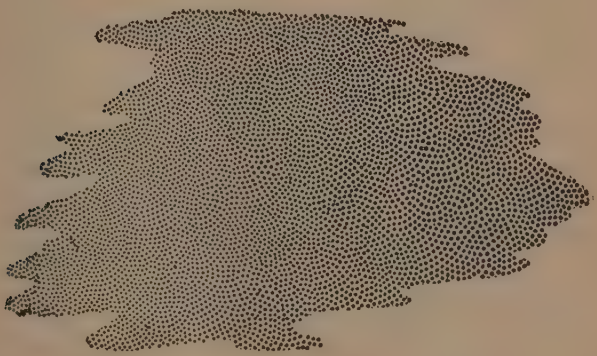
As Vance concluded this spectacular Diary, a gloomy silence fell upon the doomed library. Heath mopped his forehead with a red handkerchief and commenced to pace up and down the room savagely; Markham buried his head in his arms; the corpse wandered over from the window to a nearby shelf, selected a slim volume, and flopped down in the wicker arm-chair again. Vance lit a *Régie* dejectedly.

"Well, where do we stand now?" asked Markham after a silence.

"Exactly where we stood before," answered Vance dispiritedly. "In the midst of an impenetrable fog." (This fog was typical of the impenetrable fogs in which we had so often found ourselves in the previous Murder Cases; but for purposes of clarification I am embodying in this record a rough sketch on the adjoining page.)

"What is our next move?" I asked.

Heath paused in his act of pacing up and down the room, and glanced over the shoulder of the corpse. "Hullo," he announced sus-



piciously. "Riddell seems to be reading a new book."

"Say, listen, why don't you find one of your own—" began the corpse in exasperation.

"Give me it!" growled Heath, snatching it impatiently. "It looks like a book of poems, Mr. Vance."

"Poems?" Vance brightened. "What is the title?"

"'The Up-Set,'" read Heath. "It seems to

be a pome about a prize-fight. Under the title, it says: 'Joseph Moncure ('Kid') March vs. Robert ('Farmer') Frost, Ten Rounds to a Literary Decision.' That's funny!"

"I never heard of either of them," said Markham.

"*Cogito,* Markham, old dear," urged Vance. "Surely you recall Robert Frost, our uncrowned American poet laureate, whose book of New England sonnets, entitled 'West Runnin' Brook,' represents all that is classical and orthodox and academic——"

Markham shook his head vaguely.

"Or Joseph Moncure March, the rapid-fire young poet, whose modern style of free verse first achieved national distinction in a suppressed book entitled 'The Wild Party'——"

"Why, *I* read 'The Wild Party'!" gasped Heath in astonishment. "Hot stuff! Gees'! Was *that* a pome?"

"—and who continued his work," resumed Vance, "in his recent free-verse epic of the prize-ring entitled 'The Set-Up.'"

A glint of comprehension lighted Markham's eye. He grabbed the portable telephone from his

pocket, and commenced speaking down the mouthpiece hoarsely.

"In the present volume," said Vance, studying it curiously, "the actual conflict between the leaders of these two unalterably opposed schools of American verse seems to have occurred at last; and the consequent pugilistic epic is related here in the manner of Mr. March——"

Markham set down the receiver grimly. "Both done for," he announced tragically. "We were too late, again!"

"Let's hear the pome, Mr. Vance," suggested Heath.

Vance adjusted his monocle and began reading:

THE UP-SET

JOSEPH MONCURE "KID" MARCH VS. ROBERT "FARMER" FROST

One

KID MARCH had the stuff but his style was hard;
And he never got a chance at the Pulitzer Award.

Keen as a razor,
Tough as a strop,
He could write like a fool
And he knew when to stop.
His pace was swift
His plot was bold,
His last-line wallop
Would drop you cold.
Compact, terse, hard-boiled;
Tough?
I'll tell de woild.

His language was crude,
Colorful,
Rough:
With lines short,
But long enough.
Compact;
Neat.
He was light on his poetical feet.
(I'd like to show you
How bad he'd swear;
But it couldn't be printed in *Vanity Fair*.)
His stuff was modern.
He packed a punch.

But he didn't rate
With the Classical Bunch;
And whatever he wrote, you knew that he gave
Milton a shudder in his grave.
He was slick:
Quick:
Each effect was like a brick.

His poetry had the general mien
Of a sonnet written on a sewing-machine.
He got you nervous:
You never could tell
If his verse was prose, or what the hell.
The rhymes were cock-eyed—
The lines wouldn't scan—
But you couldn't lay it down once you began.
He'd warm up slow:
He'd let you go
For maybe a couple of pages or so.
Then he'd start.
One left—
One right—
And you'd keep on reading
The rest of the night.
Abrupt,

Emphatic,
His poems were always dramatic.

2

Then,
Sudden disaster:
A Boston pastor
Invoked the Senate's Clean Books law.
And hung a hot one on March's jaw.
They discovered his first book told the truth
And therefore endangered the morals of youth.
"Literature," Kid March pled.
"Obscene," the censor said.

Youth must be saved.
Mr. Sumner knew best.
"The Wild Party" was suppressed.

Two

Time out.
One year has passed:
Kid March has been released at last.
He is back to try to win his laurels
Without corrupting American morals.

Now he offers "The Set-Up,"
A dramatic recital,
To meet all comers for the Poetry title.

Three

The Hall of Fame was packed that night
With a public eager to see the fight
Between the challenger,
"Kid" March's book,
And "Farmer" Frost's "West Running Brook."
Battle of the Century!
Classic Collision!
Ten editions to a decision!

The huge Arena seemed dim,
Vast,
Filled with the shadows of the past.
The gathering crowd was vague and blurred.
Their judgment depended
On what they heard:
Newspaper ads;
Publicity stunts;
(The American public buys anything once.)

They only perused what the critics told them
And bought what the man in the bookstore sold
them.

2

In the centre of the floor
The raised ring stood;
The light glared down from a metal hood.
The figures within it were ponderous,
Slow;
They crouched without exchanging a blow.
They didn't seem to do much fighting,
But that is the trouble with epic writing.

Around the ring,
Alert for news,
The critics were writing
Their reviews:
Each was preparing a pompous quotation
To bolster his critical reputation;
Each was prepared to sacrifice that
If a wise-crack happened to sound more pat.
They balanced their typewriters on their knees,
And they never raised their eyes
From the keys.
They didn't have to watch the racket.

They did their reviews right from the jacket.
Praising their friends;
Smug;
Secure:
The judges of American literature.

"Hey, buddy, I missed de opening bout.
How did dem two lightweights make out?"

"Who, dem?
Oh, fine.
Parker knocked out Hoffenstein!
One on the button in the third——"

"Aw, I knew dat Parker could lick dat bird!"

Shouts, calls,
Caterwauls:
"Come on, 'John Brown,'
Knock him down!"
Concerted yelling from one direction:
The Book-of-the-Month Club cheering section.

"Who's fighting now?"

"You kidding me? Say,
Dis here is Battling Steve Benét!"

"Yeh? Didn't he train wit' Guggenheim?"

"Sure, he handled him quite a time;
Two years in Yurrop——"

"Gees, he *oughta* be prime!"

Bowed;
A little cowed;
Several old timers sat in the crowd:
Markham, still leaning on the hoe
Which once had knocked them for a row;
And Masters, of a former age
When epitaphs were all the rage.
Dead;
Almost unread.
Forgotten by a younger set
Which had written nothing to forget.

"Who's Benét fighting?"

"Some old-time gink;
Sandburg, or some such name, I think.

It doesn't matter.
He don't rate.
I hear he had trouble to make the weight."

"Sure, Steve should be middle-weight champeen
With his epics of the American scene——"

Clang!

"There goes the bell!
Who's the announcer?"

"That's John Riddell!"

"Thee-ee decision, ladies and gents—
Thee-ee-ee decision is—
BENÉT!
He is now being matched to meet Millay
In this Arena, one year from to-day."

3

A happy shout.

"Good Morning, America" is carried out;
The crowd settles down for the final bout.

The ring is cleared,
The clamor has died.
Covici's elbow
Dug Kid March's side.

"Well—" he smiled.
"Here goes!
Come on, now—
On your toes!"

Friede lifted the bucket.
"Okay," he said.
Kid March strode down the aisle ahead.

A murmur arose from the gaping crowd;
They exchanged eager comments aloud:
"That's Kid March!
Did you read 'The Wild Party'?"

"Well, the Kid's looking pretty hearty!"

"I hear he uses Masefield's style——"

"Aw, he could beat Masefield by a mile!"

Suddenly
Frost appeared;
A few hoarse voices cheered.
Kid March stared at what he saw:
Granite shoulders;
New England jaw;
A Hardy form;
Plenty of meat;
Balanced securely
On classical feet;
Fists like sonnets,
Solid,
Sure.
Powerful lines
That would endure.

Something in March grew suddenly tight;
He knew he was in for a nasty fight.

4

The bell hammered,
Staccato,
Swift.
John Riddell's arm began to lift:

"LA-A-DEES—AN'
Gents . . ."
His voice roared out;
Echoed;
Immense:
In the vast arena
The words were lost.
". . . IN THIS CORNER—
FARMER FROST . . .!"

The Farmer bowed,
As stiff as starch.

". . . AND IN THIS CORNER—"
He bellowed:

". . . KID MARCH!"

Covici picked March's bathrobe up.
"All right, Kid—
Go get 'em, pup!"
The bell clanged.
Their gloves touched,
Brushed;
Around the ring the critics sat hushed.

5

They circled a moment,
Getting acquainted.
Kid March pretended to rhyme:
Feinted.
Frost raised his eyebrows
And shrugged unheeding;
He couldn't forget his Boston breeding.

The Kid
Crouched;
He
Pulled
His
Blows:
Then suddenly shot one full-length to the nose.

It caught Frost by surprise;
He glared at Kid March
And blinked his eyes.
They circled again;
Neither one led.
The Kid played the body;
Frost aimed at the head.
"Come on, now, Farmer!
Dis guy ain't nuttin'—

Shoot him a trilogy to de button!
Sock 'im wit' a landscape—
Put him away!
Just send him a quatrain:
A, B, B, A!"

Applause and jeers from the opposite faction:
"You got him on plot, Kid—
Show us some action!"

6

Then suddenly,
Ominously,
Austere,
Farmer Frost uncorked an idea.

Kid March saw it coming;
He stood surprised.
His brain seemed dull,
Paralyzed.
He watched it coming
A hell of a while:
It sprang from the earth
In Vergilian style;
Started slow;
Gathered force;

Rose in a purely classical course.
March ducked too late
To save himself—!
It knocked him
For a five-foot shelf.

"Two . . .
"Three . . ."
He blinked his eyes and tried to see.
He seemed to be lying
On the floor:
He couldn't remember . . .
A voice droned *"Four . . ."*

His brain clicked.
Now he knew what it said:
They were counting editions
Over his head.

"Five . . ." said the voice,
Almost lost:
He had to get up
And get this Frost!

He crouched;
Sprang!
No time for rhymes now—

To hell with that!
He struck,
Hit something hard,
Slumped back against the ropes.

He glanced at his feet—
Then stared aghast—
He seemed to have won the fight at last!
Frost writhed there before him
In great agitation,
Clutching in both hands
His reputation.

The crowd rose:
Booed:
Clamored:
The bell hammered.
John Riddell sprang through the ropes once more,
And raised the Farmer's limp wrist from the floor.
He held it aloft;
Waved his hat;
Bowed.
His voice rang out above the crowd:

"Frost wins on a foul!
The judges' slips show it!
Kid March is ruled out—
He wasn't a poet!"

Four

And that is the tale of how Kid March lost
The critics' decision to Farmer Frost.
They declared Frost poet laureate,
And as for March,
He got the gate . . .
As a matter of fact,
It was just as he'd planned,
For the whole gate totalled some fifty grand.
Which shows that it pays
To be a palooka:
Frost got the credit,
But March got the lucre.

2

And the moral is this: In American verse
The better you are, the pay is worse.

CHAPTER XII

THE SLIGHTLY PIED PIPER

(Monday, April 1; 5:05 p. m.)

"'Pon my soul, the thing doesn't fit." Vance gazed at the table dejectedly. "Why should the murderer seek to do away with two such innocent and respectable poets as March and Frost, when there are so many more eligible candidates for destruction? It's inexplicable—mad!"

He beat a nervous tattoo on the table, his brows contracted.

"It probably just happened that way," Markham argued, almost automatically. "Plots act fantastically sometimes."

Vance shook his head.

"Nothing has 'just happened' in this case. There's a terrible logic about everything—a carefully planned reason behind each new murder. Nothing has been left to chance. Still, this very systematization of the crime will eventually prove the murderer's downfall. When we can find a key to any one of the anterooms, we'll

know our way into the main chamber of horrors."

"What I'd give a lot to know is," sighed Heath, "just who is likely to be next!"

"Ah, Sergeant!" Vance glanced up quickly. "Now you've hit it! *Who is likely to be next?* That is our *modus operandi.* What American author is the most popular remainin' candidate for the murderer's blade?" He commenced to pace the room nervously. "Rack your brains, Sergeant. Put yourself in the murderer's place, Markham. If you were a reader, what author would you like to see done away with next?"

For a moment we all searched our minds desperately. Suddenly we looked up.

"Richard Halliburton!" we exclaimed as one.

"Of course!" cried Vance. "The author of 'The Royal Road to Romance' and 'The Glorious Adventure'—the irrepressible, irresponsible, bubbling youth of America, exploring each year the quaint customs and manners of the natives along the Chautauqua Circuit! Hero of the Ladies' Clubs, idol of the sex-starved spinsters, Don Juan of all the suburban housewives! Halliburton—who else?"

Vance suddenly became a man of action.

"Van, you and Sergeant Heath search the library for a copy of one of his books. Markham, do you try to telephone Mr. Halliburton's study at once." He lit a *Régie* nervously. "Oh, pray God we are too late!"

"Hello . . . hello . . ." Markham spoke hurriedly into the receiver of his portable telephone. "Halliburton's study—is Mr. Halliburton——?"

He set down the receiver and faced us with a sigh of relief.

"Pierced through the heart with a long sharp instrument," he reported. "Rubber-soled tennis shoe in place. Everything satisfactory."

Vance nodded briefly.

"Is this what you was looking for, Mr. Vance?" inquired Sergeant Heath, removing from a high shelf a large illustrated volume, on the cover of which was pictured a young man with blond curly hair, standing with legs spread wide apart, hands on hips, and his fountain-pen clutched in his bared white teeth. The Taj Mahal was barely visible in the background.

"That must be he." Vance opened the book

eagerly. "Yes, here it is inscribed: 'To John Riddell, with the compliments of the author.' It could not be any other!"

"What is the title?" urged Markham.

"This book is called 'The Slightly Pied Piper,'" read Vance. "And apparently Mr. Halliburton has endeavored here to give a few brief instructions in the art of swimming, based on his own self-acknowledged proficiency in the art, for the benefit of his feminine admirers in the Ladies' Clubs where he is so popular."

Vance and Markham crowded around him eagerly.

"Perpend," said Vance, adjusting his monocle and beginning the volume.

THE SLIGHTLY PIED PIPER

Introduction:

Adventure! Romance!! Youth!!!

What panting feminine bosom has not longed to palpitate with the thrill of travel? What worshipping female in my adoring audience has not yearned to follow me, as I placed the Pipes of

Pan to my lips and danced down the Royal Road to Romance? What languishing members of the Ladies' Clubs where I have lectured so impetuously have not ached to throw off the hampering clothes and corsetings of civilization, and follow me, follow me, foot-loose and fancy-free, into the briny deep—perchance to breast the Hellespont or the Tiber, perchance to leap into the Well of the Virgins, perchance to swim the Panama Canal?

Yet stay! Look well, my fluttering spinsters and lonely matrons! Ere you follow the impulsive Richard into these beckoning waters, ere you attempt to swim with him these great rivers and wells and canals, you must be sure that you are able to navigate successfully. You must first be acquainted with the difficult art of natation, if you would venture with him beyond your depth. Do not depend upon water-wings, miladies! Do not seek to lean upon Richard's brave young arms. Those brave young arms are going to have plenty to do taking care of Richard himself.

It is in order to teach my fair followers the practical science of keeping afloat in water,

therefore, that I venture here for the first time to offer a few hints upon the subject of Swimming for Ladies, based upon my own extensive experiences. By following the brief jogs and reminders for the venturous mermaid, as contained in this chapter, it is hoped that my doting audience may soon be able, like myself, to essay the finny deep, and to venture in my wake from Glorious Adventure to Glorious Adventure, breasting with me the flowing waves of the stream of Youth—of Adventure—of Romance—

Swimming for Ladies

So up with you, girls! Into the water, one and all. The surf is calling you, the splashing wavelets desire to be your playmates, the other fish are all waiting to sport with you in the briny deep. So hurry, then! Strip off that superfluous adipose tissue, and scamper hand-in-hand down the white sand. Come on in, girls, the water's fine!

Everywhere the call of the deep is sounding to our vigorous American womanhood. At Palm Beach this winter many fashionable dowagers have ventured to dabble their toes now and then

in the surf; whilst the bright red bathing-bonnets and puffed sleeves of our younger débutantes are often descried dancing coquettishly with the heads of their gentlemen escorts far out upon the curling breakers of Brighton Beach, Asbury Park and the Jersey resorts. "Ladies' Day" is already becoming a weekly social feature of many of the better Yacht Clubs along the Harlem. Truly, as Brander Matthews has it in *Puck,* woman's place to-day is in the foam (home)!

So down to the beach with you, ladies one and all. Let us scamper up the diving-board, on tiptoes for our exhilarating bath. Let us spring into the air and feel the sudden recoil of the hard plank directly behind us, as we bounce slightly, describe a graceful arc and land on our backs in the water. Splash! Now we are swimming side by side, breasting the merry billows! Fling out your arms, ladies, toss your heads, kick out your legs! Watch out, you have just thrust your toe into the mouth of that bald-headed fellow behind you. Never mind what he is saying; let us simply swim away and ignore him.

What sport! Say, shall we make for that red rubber ball floating there on the water? Hurray, a race! Now you are ahead; now I am gaining on you; now you have the ball in your hands. Let go, I think it is somebody's head. Oh, it is that same bald fellow's head; and now he is chasing us! How we are laughing!

There! he has ducked us, and we are under the water; let us open our eyes and look about. What do we see? That black shape which flashed past us just now was doubtless a curious fish which came to gape at these strange intruders. Those bright spots below us are probably pebbles; but what are those ten pink ones all in a row? Shall we pinch them and see? Careful, milady, they are that rude fellow's toes, who is holding us upside down by the ankles. Oh, see! what an interesting object over there, which looks like a part of a peanut-butter sandwich. Why, it *is* part of a peanut-butter sandwich; and the under part at that. What luck! And that abalone shell which you have picked up in your hand must be half a grape-fruit rind. Keep it. Perhaps it will come in handy.

But come, our breath is almost spent, and we

RICHARD HALLIBURTON

Glorious Youth, Racketeer of Adventure, Idol of the Ladies' Clubs, our Romantic Richard stands upon the lecture platform in typical posture, clad in native grass skirt and shouldering his ever-ready fountain pen, while the worshipful female admirers at his feet extend copies of "New Worlds to Conquer" for him to autograph.

must be off and away to the surface again, before we have seen half the interesting things at the bottom of the sea. What a jolly swim we have had! Now we are strolling slowly up the beach again. Here, lend me that old rind a minute. Ready . . . take aim . . . fire! Now let us run.

The sport of swimming for ladies is justly increasing in popularity year after year; for women of to-day are beginning to realize that, in moderation, it is a highly beneficial form of exercise, and may some day be the means of saving life. Every physically sound girl should be taught to swim as a matter of personal safety; for experts are agreed that a knowledge of swimming is the best method of keeping afloat in water, unless one is in, for example, a boat.

But how, the novice asks, am I to keep my head above water? How may I put it under and bring it forth at will, propel myself forward by my own hands and nether limbs, or mayhap venture safely beyond my depth? How shall I behave myself when I am in a bathing-suit? I

want to swim, and that, please, in the very shortest possible time.

Patience, my eager beginner. All these things will come in due course. Rome was not built in a day; and swimming, like all really worthwhile things, may be mastered only by steady application and diligent effort. Your enthusiasm, Mistress Bright-Eyes, is most encouraging, for the will to learn is half the battle; but the circumspect pupil will direct her eagerness into judicious channels and with slow and studied progress

". . . build foundations secure;
The course of Wisdom is ever truer."
—Godey's Lady's Book.

The timid beginner may take heart in the knowledge that swimming comes more naturally to the average girl than to the average boy. This, probably, is due to the fact that the female form is more buoyant for several reasons, all of which become apparent when she is floating in the water; or perhaps it is because the girl is naturally a year ahead of the boy. On the other hand, it may be merely that she uses water-

wings. The fact that the girl pupil cannot walk into the water and at once swim is simply due to nervousness and untried muscles. The instant that the proper motions are performed, the pupil will swim. It cannot be otherwise. Her head might and probably would go under; but as long as she maintained the proper leg and arm motions, she would be swimming away, a short distance below the surface. This thought should give added confidence to the beginner when she faces her first lesson.

Ere we begin, however, a word as to clothing. The greatest difficulty which the female pupil must encounter to-day is found in the costume which that all-powerful Dame Custom has decreed she must wear. Judged from the healthy and rational point of view, anything more absurd and impractical than the prescribed women's bathing-suit would be difficult to find; and the lady novice will do well to discard these silly conventions of fashion for the untrammelled freedom of unclad limbs. While the old adage "Hang your clothing upon a hickory limb!" naturally need not be followed to the letter, the beginner on the other hand must not

be misled by false modesty to encumber herself with superfluous fabric. Surely the healthy girl need never be ashamed of exposing the glorious body which God has given her!

In selecting her costume, therefore, milady should remember that "enough is as good as a feast"; and a sensible and withal conservative swimming outfit will discard the old-fashioned mittens and cumbersome whale-bone corsetings of yesteryear, and consist merely of the usual "heavies" or drawers, two pairs of long woollen tights, black stockings (for sharks), sandals, large ruffled skirt, and a short woollen over-suit terminating abruptly at the elbows and just above each ankle. The slight irregularity of such an abbreviated costume will be far outweighed by the natural movement and graceful play of limbs which this up-to-date athletic gear affords. If the modest girl is sensitive, however, to the attention which her roguish appearance might create on the beach, she may make her way from the bath-house to the surf clad in an unobtrusive chinchilla ulster.

Now, then! Let us imagine that the novice is properly clad and ready for her first lesson,

preferably under the direction of some patient and experienced relative of her own sex. The scene of this instruction should be a quiet cove with a sandy beach, free from wave, tide or current; and it will also be well if the pupil select a secluded spot where she will be sheltered from prying eyes, since the hasty advice and comments of unsympathetic onlookers will often tend unduly to discourage the novice. Avoid sudden shocks, such as jelly-fish.

The next stage is largely a question of nerve. If the pupil be fearless, let her hold her breath and advance down the beach hand in hand with her instructor, until she is at the very edge of the water. Halt here, and allow plenty of time until all signs of nervousness have disappeared. A few moments should suffice.

Now, holding carefully to her instructor's hand, let her face the water and lower her body by bending forward at the waist, until the hands and wrists are completely submerged. Perhaps she will gasp with fright and attempt to rise. Give her plenty of time to get used to this novel position. So soon as she feels at home, she will commence to paddle her hands about and laugh-

ingly splash water up onto her instructor. I believe in allowing plenty of this sort of fun, for it will make the pupil keener for the next lesson. Take her out of the water a bit sooner than she would prefer.

Not much progress? Don't be so sure of that. More has been accomplished than you fancy. The pupil has become accustomed to the feel of the water, the dread has lessened, and above all she has not been bullied or scared. Indeed she will be not a little proud of herself and eager for another lesson, and that is precisely what is desired.

For the second lesson the teacher should have a long leather strap, which will buckle loosely about the pupil's inflated chest and afford room for a secure handhold. Once she realizes that she is safe on this strap, the great difficulty is over. Now have her assume the position of yesterday; and with her hands flat on the sand lead her carefully on all fours along the edge of the water. Be extremely careful lest an injudicious word or movement cause alarm. Nearly every pupil is afraid at this stage, though many attempt to conceal the fact. While supported by

the strap there is absolute safety. When the pupil has become accustomed to the forward movement, the teacher can slyly slacken the strap, using the loose end now and then to advantage, until the pupil is propelling herself rapidly along the beach by her own momentum. After a few yards the real difficulty has been mastered. The pupil has moved herself forward by her own hands; and she knows it! A few more lessons on the strap to inspire confidence, a few proving trials with the teacher near enough for an emergency, then hey! for fancy strokes and the higher branches of natation!

A bright fearless pupil should learn the overhand, the crawl and the breast-stroke in less than half a dozen lessons, which may be taken at night in the privacy of her own bedroom. Diagrams of these positions should be tucked in her dressing-mirror and carefully imitated upon retiring; for the pupil's progress henceforward depends only on her own patience and effort. The art of floating, for example, may be mastered by reclining each night at full length on a mattress, with the arms locked behind the head and the legs straight, and maintaining this

position for eight or nine hours. Practise shutting the eyes.

Diving should be attempted as soon as the pupil is sufficiently advanced, for without it the art of swimming is only half mastered. The actual form of diving may be acquired if the earnest pupil will attempt in gradual succession to leap from the top of her bureau into the bed-pillows, from the medicine-chest to the bath-tub, or from the rear of a moving horse-car to the flagstones in front of Delmonico's. Remember that a graceful landing is the first requisite of a perfect diver.

Well done, then, milady! Congratulations upon your success! Steady application and diligent effort have had their reward! Behold, our erstwhile pupil is versed in a thorough knowledge of aquatics; and the awkward beginner of yesterday has now become an expert swimmer, who can well challenge her instructor to an exhibition of natation in the sparkling waves. The surf is calling; and milady is ready at last to venture into the water.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING

(*Monday, April 1; 5:51 p. m.*)

As Vance concluded this significant chapter, Markham rose to his feet and levelled his forefinger eagerly.

"At last I begin to feel that we are making headway," he exclaimed. "The Halliburton murder has encouraged me greatly. From now on our course is clear: we have only to guess the next most likely person to be placed on the murderer's *index expurgatorius*——"

"Excellent, old dear," drawled Vance, "but how are you going to guess this author?"

"Surely that should not be hard," said Markham. "There cannot be very many——"

"Ah, don't be too sanguine, my dear Markham," adjured Vance. "Consider the list of possibilities for a moment. There is, *exempli gratia,* John Erskine; or Julian Greene; or André

Maurois; or John Cowper Powys; or Carl Van Vechten——"

The corpse rose with a gesture of impatience and crossed the room swiftly.

"I assure you, the task is not as easy as you imagine," said Vance, watching the progress of the corpse warily out of the corner of his eye. "Indeed, if we survey the broad horizon of American literature to-day, the difficulty rather would be to find very many who did *not* belong upon our roll of candidates——"

He broke off abruptly. The corpse had lifted a heavy book from a high shelf, and brought it over to him confidently. Vance glanced at it briefly; a look of startled horror came over his face.

"Don't speak—pray don't speak. . . ." He clapped his hand to his forehead. "Oh, my precious aunt! How logical! How inevitable! Why did I not think of it before——"

"Who is it, Vance?" interrupted Markham impatiently.

"Quickly—it is our only chance!" Vance indicated the telephone in Markham's pocket. *"Will Durant——"*

The corpse nodded vigorously, and then leaned back in his chair with a sigh of relief.

"Will Durant?" echoed Heath questioningly.

"Durant is the current racketeer of Philosophy," explained Vance hurriedly. "As a result of his earlier training in the advertising and promotion fields, he has learned how to put the Cosmic Verities on a sound business basis, and sell Infinity to the great American public. His collections of second-hand truths, warmed-over philosophies, and cure-all religions have appeared from time to time under such titles as 'The Story of Philosophy' and 'The Mansions of Philosophy'——"

"Hello, hello," urged Markham. "Is this Mr. Durant's study——?"

"—and the present volume in my hand," continued Vance calmly, "seems to have attempted to combine all these previous efforts into one grand, complete, super-jewel, omnibus encyclopedia of the Infinite entitled 'The Philosophy of Practically Everything.' "

"Let's hear it," urged Heath.

"One moment, Sergeant," advised Vance.

"Markham has not as yet succeeded in learnin' the actual fate of our author."

"His number doesn't seem to answer," complained Markham, jiggling the receiver.

"Oh, he's dead, all right," assured the corpse. "You'll find him to-day in any Liggett's window. Go ahead with the story."

As Markham returned the portable telephone to his pocket, Vance adjusted his monocle and commenced reading slowly:

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRACTICALLY EVERYTHING

Invitation.—This book is an attempt to realize the profits of Philosophy. If we can succeed in realizing a few of these profits as successfully as Dr. Durant did, we shall feel amply repaid.

On all sides our harried civilization is confronted daily with a veritable babel of unanswered questions, hurled like chaff from the flying wheels of progress: "What is life?" "What is truth?" "What is God?" "How do I get to Kew Gardens from Jamaica?" "Are par-

ents people?" "Have you got the loan of a match?" "What time is it?" "If seven laborers working sixteen hours loaded fourteen bags of wheat, how long would it take four laborers working fifteen hours?" "Where is the men's room?" Our only solution is to view life as a whole, and resolve these vexing questions into the single universal query: "What?"

This modest volume is the answer.

To be sure, "The Story of Philosophy" and "The Mansions of Philosophy" have already attempted to put the Eternal Verities on a sound paying basis, and make the American public Cosmos-Conscious. But Will Durant's Encyclopedias of the Infinite, though settling such varied problems as truth, infant-feeding and the tariff, still leave something to be desired as the complete guide to every possible problem of life. It is in an effort to meet this crying need, therefore, that we have attempted here to go Dr. Durant one better, and compile the complete all-time Philosophy of Philosophies, guaranteed to solve all problems or your money back.

So hop aboard, folks! Mount onto the Omnibus of Philosophy! Let us embark upon the

great, complete, all-inclusive, *de luxe* Round-Trip Excursion to Infinity. We shall proceed first to logic, observing science, cause and effect, pausing a moment at the shrine of truth, or taking, if desired, an interesting side-trip to rationalism and the life of reason. (Passengers taking this excursion may meet the party again at emotions.) At metaphysics we shall spend a delightful half-hour exploring the interesting native glossaries and shopping for souvenir words to send back to the folks at home. Back into our luxurious omnibus again, only pausing to take a few snapshots of the quaint old philosophers sitting in the sun; and then, with a toot of the horns and a shower of torn-up theories about sex, we shall set out down the World's Most Travelled Highway for ethics and a big evening of immorality, divorce, loose love, companionate marriage, and sin. (Note: Passengers who so desire may remain at this chapter and be picked up on the return trip.) Off bright and early again the following morning for religion, including a complete tour of magic, ancestor-worship, mysticism, Methodism, and the New God; a quick lunch of history,

with one hour to devour progress, civilization, and the future of America; thence to politics, devoting the remainder of the afternoon to socialism, democracy, liberty, chaos, æsthetics, love, truth, life (including birth, youth-and-whither-drifting, middle-age, death), the quest of happiness, bibliography, appendix, or eighteen holes of golf, returning home that evening, tired but happy, vowing that it was one of the pleasantest and most profitable excursions our club has taken, and feeling all fit and ready to face life on the morrow.

Send for our illustrated catalogue of the Big Philosophy Excursion, including full rates and itinerary of hotels, side-trips to interesting foot-notes, and free guide-service to the classics. Lift yourself to freedom and serenity. Knowledge is power, wisdom is liberty, the whole round-trip can be covered in thirty-six hours. Be Cosmos-Minded. Tour the infinite for $5.00.

PART I.

Introduction.

CHAPTER I.

What is Philosophy?

DR. WILL DURANT

And here we witness at last the apotheosis of Will Durant. With "The Mansions of Philosophy" clasped to his bosom, surrounded by the familiar insignia of his publishers, the canonized figure of Simon and Schuster's Cosmic Racketeer invites his faithful readers to join him again on another Round Trip Tour of the Infinite.

1. Introïbo.

What is introïbo?

2. Epistemologs.

What are epistemologs?

3. Entelechy.

As a matter of fact, I don't think we are getting ahead very fast with this book.

PART II.

Logic, Metaphysics, and Æsthetics.

CHAPTER II.

What is Truth?

1. Fact.

Besides common salt, it has been calculated that the Dead Sea contains 1,300,000,000 tons of potash, 850,000,000 tons of bromides, and over 20,000,000,000 tons of magnesium chloride.

2. Theory.

Henry Ford says that Prohibition is 99 per cent effective.

3. Revenue at Panama Canal.

A total of $2,127,851, or a daily average of $70,928, was collected from 503 commercial vessels and 10 yachts passing through the Panama Canal in June, 1929.

PART III.

What is Morality?

CHAPTER III.

What is Love?

See Sex. (*Now* we're going somewhere!)

CHAPTER IV.

What is Sex?

Hah, bo-o-oy! Ask me!

Well. After due study of the subject, I have just about come to the conclusion that there isn't any Sex. This conclusion will doubtless shock a great many readers, who have been laboring for years under the out-dated Biblical theory that "male and female created He them," and have even gotten married and produced

children, a fact which, according to my theory, is absolutely impossible.

"Sex," as it is called, is nothing more nor less than a mild form of rickets; and its frequent manifestations are merely a part of the great submerged desire of the human race to pedal a bicycle, a universal instinct which has come down to us from the old cradle-days of Mankind when our forefathers lived on the tops of high-wheeled "bikes." The reaction which the sight of a feminine ankle awakens to-day is only the age-old jungle impulse to see if she is wearing her bicycle-clips.

This conclusion, as well as others, was derived by me from a life-long study of ants.

In the first place, as Fabre has pointed out, a man may gain a great deal of knowledge and profit from the study of ants. He may learn diligence, and trustworthiness, and honesty. He may learn the tireless industry of these tiny creatures, and observe the infinite patience and skill with which they burrow their homes, move untold obstacles, secrete their eggs, hatch their young, and drag lumps of food many times their weight for incredible distances. What's more,

after watching all these interesting things, a man may stand up and light a cigarette and walk away; but the ant has to stick around and *do* them. This is why more men are not ants.

On the other hand, a man who sets out to learn about Sex from ants, as I did, will experience considerable difficulty, owing principally to the fact that it is almost impossible for a man to tell the difference between a male ant and a female ant. This has bothered everyone for ages, except ants. After spending several months in an ant-heap, disguised in a red necktie as a neuter ant, or "drone," I came to the conclusion that one ant was like another, as far as I was concerned, and the whole experiment was pretty darned silly. As far as I can see, there is no Sex among ants.

Not for me, anyway.

Chapter V.

Marriage and Divorce.

According to science the female praying mantis (*Phasmomantis carolina*) has a unique habit during the mating season of reaching around and eating her prospective husband.

You would think that the males would get onto this in time; but no.

A curious feature of this form of hypocrisy (for anyone who has seen a female mantis at her prayers, her front legs crossed piously and her mandibles pursed in a sanctimonious smile, could scarcely suspect her of this voracious appetite) is the fact that it does not seem to discourage the males; and often a young mantis will lose his head over a female and in his efforts to be a good husband allow himself to be completely devoured before he realizes his predicament. As a result, the female mantis is the only creature known to science who can be a widow before she is a bride.

I was only getting around to saying that with human beings, of course, this is quite impossible.

Chapter VI.

Fur Sealskins Taken at Pribilow Islands.

Fur sealskins taken at the Pribilow Islands during the summer season of 1929 totalled 39,253.

PART IV.

Civilization: A Symposium.

Characters of the Dialogue.

Friedrich Nietzsche
Coolidge
Alice Foote MacDougall
François Marie Arouet de Voltaire
Walter Winchell
Inspector Burns of Scotland Yard
Karl Marx
William Makepeace Thackeray
William T. Tilden
Frank Sullivan
Buddha
Grover Cleveland
Krafft-Ebing
The Dolly Sisters
Zip (by himself)
Will Durant
Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu.
Russel Crouse
William Cullen Bryant
Dr. Fu Manchu
Simon
Schuster
The Narrator
Peasants, Soldiers, Sixteen Tiller Girls, Sparrows, and Hautboys with Torches.

The scene is a backroom in the Mansion of Philosophy. A single candle sputters on the table. In the wavering light the dim figures seated about the board seem ghost-like and unreal, as if they were shades from another world. Quietly we draw near and seat ourselves at the table in silence, lest we should break some magic charm.

At length a gloomy figure with a long beard stirs and speaks in a hollow voice.

ANATOLE FRANCE: I can't open.

WILL DURANT (*glancing sadly at his hand*): Neither can I.

JOHN RIDDELL: I'll open for fifty cents.

PART V.

Religion.

CHAPTER VIII.

What is Religion?

The Bible contains 3,586,486 letters and 773,693 words; 31,173 verses and 1189 chapters beside 66 books. The books were written by 40 men during a period of 1600 years. The word "and" is found in the Bible 46,278 times, and the word "reverend" but once. The 19th Chapter of II Kings and the 37th Chapter of Isaiah are alike. The middle verse of the Bible is Psalm xcii: 8.

PART VI.

The Quest of Happiness.

CHAPTER IX.

Ramos Fizz.

Pour in a shaker one portion of dry gin, juice of half a lemon, white of one egg, one teaspoonful of powdered sugar, a few dashes of orange bitters. Fill with ice and mix thoroughly to combine ingredients. Serve in a tall tumbler with sodawater.

PART VII.

Whither Are We Drifting?

CHAPTER X.

Progress.

Trains leave Brooklyn or the Battery, as designated, to the Jerome Avenue Branch, the West Farms Branch or the Pelham Bay Park Branch, Bronx. To reach a point on the West Side subway, transfer to shuttle train at Grand Central Station, and retransfer at Times Square for local to Mott Avenue and 149th Street.

CHAPTER XI.

Artificial Respiration.

In case of drowning, place the patient flat upon the ground, face downward, and straddle the hips as illustrated (figure 13). Lay your hands on his lower ribs, one hand upon each side of the back-bone. Lean forward so that your body weight falls gradually on your hands, snap the hands off quickly after three seconds, rest for two seconds, then repeat the forward pressure movement, to the count of one two three four five.

CHAPTER XII.

The World We Live In.

1. Butter Made from Milk of Ebus.

Butter can be made from milk of ebus.

2. An Interesting Fact.

American exports and imports in July attained the greatest volume since 1920, exports amounting to $401,000,000, as against $378,984,000 in 1928, according to Department of Commerce figures.

3. Herrings.

There are more herrings eaten than any other kind of fish.

PART VIII.

Envoi.

CHAPTER XIII.

Life : A Symposium.

Characters of the Dialogue.

Will Durant John Riddell

(Anatole France has gone home.)

The scene is the same backroom of the Mansion of Philosophy. It is getting late, and a charwoman, Fate, is mopping the floor. Will Durant looks up wearily.

WILL DURANT: I can't open.

JOHN RIDDELL: Neither can I.

(*They get up and go out.*)

PART IX.

Bibliography.

"The Story of Philosophy," by Will Durant (*Simon and Schuster*). "The Mansions of Philosophy," by Will Durant (*ibid.*). "Philosophy

and the Social Problem," by Will Durant (*ibid.*). "The Story of Civilization," by Will Durant (*to be written*), "The World Almanack," "The Boy Scout Handbook," the "New International Encyclopedia," "Elbert Hubbard's Scrap Book," "Dr. Cadman's Counsel," and a suitable selection of Christmas greeting cards.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW TO RAISE PIGEONS FOR PROFIT

(Monday, April 1; 6:32 p. m.)

While Vance had been reading the preceding volume, I had noticed a growing activity on the part of the corpse. With quick deft movements it had crossed the room, opened a small closet, secured a step-ladder, and arranged it before one of the tallest cases in the library. Grasping a long pole with metal tongs on the end, similar to the instrument used in grocery stores for lifting down cans of soup from a high shelf, it now mounted this ladder, clamped the tongs around a gray dust-covered volume on top of the highest case in the room, and lowered the book with great care.

"Y' know, Markham," began Vance, ignoring this curious action on the part of the corpse, "we've been looking at the various occurrences in this Riddell case as though they were the unrelated objects of a photograph. We've inspected each fact as it came up; but we have

failed to analyze sufficiently its connection with all the other known facts. We've regarded this whole affair as though it were a series, or collection, of isolated integers. And we've missed the significance of everything because we haven't yet determined the basic pattern——"

The corpse crossed the library, smiling to itself, and held the dust-covered book outstretched before Vance.

"It goes without saying, of course, that there is a design at the bottom of this whole amazin' business," continued Vance intently, ignoring the proffered volume. "Nothing has happened haphazardly. There has been premeditation behind each act—a subtly and carefully concocted composition——"

The corpse began to pluck persistently at his sleeve.

"Everything has emanated from that central shape," pursued Vance. "Everything has been fashioned by a fundamental structural idea ——"

The corpse joggled his arm impatiently, shoved the book under his nose, and nodded insistently.

"All the aspects of the case, taken together, form a unity," hurried Vance, "a co-ordinated, interactive whole——"

"Hey," pleaded the corpse.

"I think there is a new book in Riddell's hand," suggested Markham.

Vance gazed for the first time at the outstretched volume, and adjusted his monocle in bewilderment.

"'How to Raise Pigeons for Profit,'" he read. "There must be some mistake."

The corpse shook its head vigorously.

"I fear this volume is only a red herring which is being drawn across our trail," shrugged Vance, turning away casually. "As I was remarking when we were interrupted, Markham," he continued, "it is only when we have determined the interrelationship of the external factors, and traced the visual forms to their generating lines——"

The corpse commenced to bang the covers of the book together determinedly.

"—then we can see the design on which the perverted painter has erected his document'ry material," shouted Vance above the noise, "and

discover the underlying shape of this hideous picture's pattern——"

In exasperation the corpse blew a choking cloud of dust off the cover of the book.

"Really, Vance, I think you should glance at this volume," choked Markham, sneezing vigorously. "Riddell seems to be rather insistent."

"I assure you it will prove quite useless," said Vance, dusting his monocle and placing it in his eye. He blinked. "This volume is apparently a dissertation upon the pitfalls and misadventures awaiting the amateur pigeon fancier. I do not see what possible connection——"

"Read it, anyway, Mr. Vance," urged Heath. "It probably has as much connection as what you were just saying."

"We must not overlook any possible clue," agreed Markham.

With a sigh of resignation Vance opened the grimy volume gingerly and commenced reading:

HOW TO RAISE PIGEONS FOR PROFIT

Brief Instructions for the Nature Fancier

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO RAISE BEES FOR PROFIT," "HOW TO RAISE CHECKS FOR PROFIT," ETC.

The first requisite in starting a pigeon-farm is to move into a neighborhood where there are a lot of pigeons.

Attach a thick iron hoop about eighteen inches in diameter to the end of a stout broom handle of ordinary size, and sew two or three flour sacks to this iron ring, gathering them together securely at the bottom. This forms an economical and practical Pigeon Net; and a little shifty work, some gray dawn, should insure the reader the nucleus of a prosperous nest.

We are now ready to talk Pigeons; and surely no member of our feathered cousins affords more fascinating study. Since the first dove returned to Noah on Mount Ararat with an olive branch, two American flags and a

Hearst editorial in his bill, these gentle creatures have ever been man's loyal and eager friend through thick and thin; and princes and courtesans, kings and chambermaids, prelates and ladies of high degree in ages past, so history tells us, often "found keen pleasure . . . up in the pygeon-lofte." How often to-day, indeed, has a faltering fancier, swaying helplessly from a lamp-post in the early morning, been led back safely to his hearth-fire by his faithful homing-pigeon? The devotion and intelligence of these bright-eyed fellows, with their loves and their heart-aches, their jealousies and their vanities and other lovable human qualities, should endear them to every amateur fancier, particularly with squabs bringing anywhere from eight to ten dollars a dozen.

As soon as a reasonable number of pigeons has been assembled, the amateur fancier must face the problem of housing his feathered pets until proper dormitory space has been provided. While work is progressing on a suitable shed in the back yard, the pigeons may share their quarters temporarily with the family; and any room, preferably the bathroom, can be fitted

into an economical and practical lodging-place. Little imagination is needed to see how readily the fixtures of this room adapt themselves to the needs of pigeons; it is advisable, however, to lower the mirror a trifle so the tiny guests will not have to crane their necks while preening. If the thoughtful fancier will remember to hang a clean towel behind the door, and leave fresh razor-blades and a tube of shaving-cream on the dresser, his little charges will soon make themselves thoroughly at home in their new quarters.

It is essential for pigeons to have plenty of room in which to fly about; and in this emergency the parlor, library and dining-room may be turned into an economical and practical Fly-Pen if the fancier will knock down a few walls and partitions and nail chicken-wire across the transom. The kitchen will prove convenient for storing grain, preparing the mash, and also mixing concrete for lining the floor of the Fly-Pen; and the bedroom may be used for breeding—and the family.

In the meantime work will be progressing as speedily as possible on the new addition next to

the garage; for it is possible that the family may be finding conditions slightly cramped in the house by this time. And what a hammering and a banging there is now, to be sure! It is best to construct this shed of one-inch rough lumber, about sixteen feet wide, with four feet of this space used as a passageway in front; the interior may be divided into any desired number of rooms. The walls must be fashioned as weather-proof as possible; and the floors may be of dirt or boards. I have found that dirt floors are thoroughly practical, in the long run.

At last the new house is finished, the last nail driven, and the paint allowed to dry! And now if the fancier will roll his pajamas and tooth-brush into a bundle, and carry out a couple of mattresses under his arm, he may move his family at once into these attractive quarters and leave full possession of his own house to the feathered guests. Provided proper care has been taken to make the roof water-tight, I am sure the family will be perfectly comfortable there as long as the weather stays warm.

So far nothing has been said of the breeds

of pigeons; but their variety and culture form a fascinating chapter of Pigeon-Raising. Darwin divides the pigeon family into four distinct groups, but later fanciers have divided it more simply into three: the rock pigeon, or wild bird; the domesticated, common or duffer pigeon; and the artificial, or clay pigeon. This article will concern itself chiefly with the second division, since most of the pigeons which are raised by amateur fanciers are duffers. For that matter, this also goes for most of the amateur fanciers.

It is with some hesitation that we next approach the delicate question of distinguishing sex in pigeons; for although the problem of sexing his stock is an essential one to every moral-minded breeder, it is unfortunately not always an easy matter for him to decide whether his pet is a little girl pigeon, or a little boy pigeon, or what. With all this bobbed hair and cigarettes and boyish bathing-suits, it is almost impossible nowadays for any but an expert to tell the sexes apart; in fact, sometimes even the pigeons themselves will forget, and just drift for days and days until something reminds

them. I once had a prize Pouter who laid eggs all one summer until he was told he was a father; and his subsequent mortification at this pardonable mistake was ludicrous in the extreme.

Unless the male pigeon can be detected by the breeder in some characteristic male act, such as striking a match on the seat of his trousers, or mislaying his hat-check, the amateur fancier will necessarily find this problem pretty much of a stumbling-block to his plans at breeding-time; and long and fruitless hours of spying and prying will be wasted before he can go ahead with his pigeon farm on an economical and practical basis again. Some experts hold that the only sure way to distinguish a male is to see whether the pigeon can drive a nail straight. For my own part, I always gather the entire flock together each spring (for there is always the chance of correcting some of last year's mistakes) and invite them all to sit in on a poker game; and by this cunning ruse I never fail to weed out every hen. I have never found a female yet who can play poker and keep her mouth shut.

Having gotten over these difficulties and secured the requisite mixture for a pair (*i. e.*, a male and a female) the amateur will naturally be anxious to see them set up housekeeping as soon as possible. Here, however, one cannot too thoroughly digest the old motto: "More haste, less speed." Pigeons are reticent and even shy; and breeders of the hail-fellow-well-met sort may feel that there is an unnecessary formality in the stiff, old-world politeness with which the male pecks at the female, kicks dust in her face, knocks over the mash-box on top of her, and chases her about the house, pulling out her tail-feathers with a studied and unfailing courtesy. A little patience and sympathy, however, will teach the owner that his feathered pets are only striving to get acquainted and prepare for married life.

I cannot speak too strongly, at this point, of the need for sympathy and kindness on the part of the breeder toward his flock. He must make the pigeons feel as soon as possible that he is one of them. For my own part, I have an old pigeon-suit which was made both economically and practically out of a feather-mattress and

my little boy's Indian war-bonnet; and in this disguise I often perch for hours on a shelf among my beauties, slowly winning their esteem and confidence, giving helpful advice to the lovelorn pigeons, and even relieving a tired female now and then on the nest.

Let us say that kindness and patience have had their way. The romance of our little pair has culminated in courtship and marriage. Time has passed; and at last, one fine morning, the hen awakes cross and broody. She pays no attention to the dandy love-nest which her mate is busy plastering with stucco; and she only smiles wanly when the anxious male offers her a tidbit of broken oyster-shell. By late afternoon she is cranky as a witch, and orders her husband from the house. All night long, with wings clasped behind him and little brow puckered in thought, the forlorn male paces up and down, up and down the balcony, torn with anxiety. Will it be a boy or a girl? Will it take after its mother's side, who were all Maltese hens; or will it be a crested red runt like its father—a regular pal? Plans, idle speculations; dreams, mayhap; and then, as he paces up and down, up

and down into the slow gray dawn, there is a faint stir overhead. With the untold question burning in his eyes, he looks up into his wife's smiling face.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" he gasps.

"It's an egg," she whispers softly.

And the exhausted husband collapses and staggers to the fountain for a drink.

The first flight of the young birds is an event for which the pigeon-fancier has no doubt waited with the keenest anticipation. Perhaps he has consulted the weather-reports, anxiously tested the wings of his young charge, weighed it carefully. By dawn of the morning when the squab will make the great attempt, news leaks out and the flying-pen is crowded with eager spectators, vying with one another to press near the hero of the hour. Wagers are laid on the success of the proposed flight, cameramen train their machines in readiness, and several veteran pigeons take off in their excitement and circle slowly in the air.

The moment approaches.

There is a slight cheer as the brave little flyer assumes his place alone, nods briskly to the

crowd, and spreads his wings. With a gasp the spectators watch him run forward, falter, rise and bump again, sinking into the soft dirt at the bottom of the flying-pen. Will he make it? Will he clear the nearest perches? Hearts cease to beat as the trim gray squab coasts forward again faster and yet faster, spreads his wings, and then rises slowly and magnificently into the air, as gracefully as a bird, and disappears, a slim gray speck far down the vast cage.

Onward he pushes, ever onward, while the old pigeons shake their heads dolefully. It is too much! He will surely fall! Rumor races after rumor, as familiar objects slip beneath him. He has crossed the last perch; now he is heading out straight over the glistening bath-pan; now the limitless cement floor stretches sullenly beneath him, cruel, menacing. But hark! a murmur, and then a shout! The eager spectators take up the cry! He has made it! He has done it! Our lone fledgling has landed safely at last on the opposite side of the cage!

Amid scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm a million hysterical watchers break down the reserve bars at the flying-pen and hoist him onto

their shoulders, as the populace breaks into a mighty cheer and Adolph Zukor rushes forward with a three-million-dollar motion-picture contract, and the world newspapers devote the first twenty-two pages to his great exploit, and Gertrude Ederle cables him that youth will be served, and huge plate-glass windows are crashed in by the swelling mob as he waves a flag from the balcony, and all the veteran pigeons kiss him enthusiastically and give him a medal, and the Ambassador refers to him 486 times as a young Lochinvar out of the West, and he dictates an exclusive story to *The Times;* and in the midst of it all his excited breeder rushes down to the other end of the cage, wrings his neck warmly, and sells him that night with eleven other squabs for $6.98.

Such is public fame.

And now the long, idle summer days are on the wane, and the first nip of fall is in the air. All has gone well with your pigeon farm. The time and money and labor which you have expended are in a fair way to be rewarded at last. Your happy brood of pigeons inside the house has prospered, mated, and reared its offspring

successfully and with credit to its breeder. Out in the plain little shed beside the garage, now bright with climbing nasturtiums and four-o'clocks, the eager family is busy weaving economical and practical baskets of raffia in which to ship your prizes to market. Rich buyers from the West are bidding against each other to purchase your stock. You already have more orders than you can fill.

The rest is very simple. When everything is in readiness, hurry out of the house that night to tell the family about your exciting prospects, and leave the door a little open behind you. (Just a little crack is enough.)

And the next day you can sweep out the empty house, and move your family back in again.

CHAPTER XV

A GALLERY OF DREISER

(Monday, April 1; 7:01 p. m.)

As Vance concluded his reading, Markham and Heath glanced at each other sheepishly. The corpse leaned back in his chair, stuffed his handkerchief in his mouth, and rocked back and forth silently, holding his sides. Vance lit a *Régie* thoughtfully.

"I got to hand it to you, Mr. Vance," admitted Heath at last. "That certainly was a false clue, all right."

"I'm sorry, Vance," added Markham generously. "Accept my apologies also. I'm afraid that last chapter has only wasted our time."

"On the contrary, my dear Markham," said Vance slowly, "this little interlude may conceivably furnish us with the very key which will eventually unlock this whole chamber of horrors."

Something in his attitude—an air of satisfaction, combined with a suppressed eagerness

—told us that he had a theory. Markham and Heath gazed at him excitedly; the corpse shot him a swift meaningful glance of interrogation. Vance returned our stares impassively.

"You know who is the murderer!" accused Markham. (The District Attorney, I could see, was strongly influenced by Vance's manner.)

"Oh, dear old chap!" Vance threw up his hands in mock protest. "Pray don't be so precipitant! I have a vague suspicion—a nebulous hypothesis—but I require considerable further evidence before I dare to level the accusin' forefinger, don't y' know. Patience, my dear Markham! Patience!" And with a tantalizing smile, he took a deep drag from his *Régie* and lapsed into a silence from which long experience had taught us it was useless to attempt to rouse him.

"In the meantime," said Markham briskly, "let's be getting ahead with this case." He paused suspiciously. "By the way, isn't there another book in the lap of Riddell?"

"Ah, ta hell with that guy," said Heath in disgust.

"We can't afford to take chances, Sergeant," reproved Markham, picking up the volume and

glancing at the title. "This seems to be called 'A Gallery of Dreiser'!"

"Dreiser!" Vance sprang to his feet in excitement. "Oh, my aunt! my precious aunt! Of course! How could I have overlooked Dreiser in the list of eligibles——"

Automatically Markham had reached in his pocket for the portable telephone.

"Is this Dreiser an author, too?" asked Heath.

"In a sense," explained Vance. "Theodore Dreiser, the President of the American Fiction Hauling and Construction Company, is known as the most patient, diligent, ponderous, elephantine, dreary, dull builder of novels to-day. The tremendous tomes which he has erected, like the Roman viaduct system and the Chinese Wall, have an excellent chance of remaining for posterity, for the simple reason that no one will ever conceivably have patience to tear them down again——"

"Hello!" Markham's voice broke in excitedly. "Is this Theodore Dreiser's house——?"

"Although his knowledge of construction is limited," continued Vance, "this clever builder

is a master of the art of making his great solid blocks of material stick together by the simple device of cementing them with plenty of dirt. For example, in such vast and impenetrable edifices as 'The Genius' and 'An American Tragedy'——"

"My God!" Markham's cry broke in upon the discussion. He replaced the receiver, and turned to us in horror: *"Dreiser, too!"*

Vance nodded. "I suspected as much. Let me see that book, Heath."

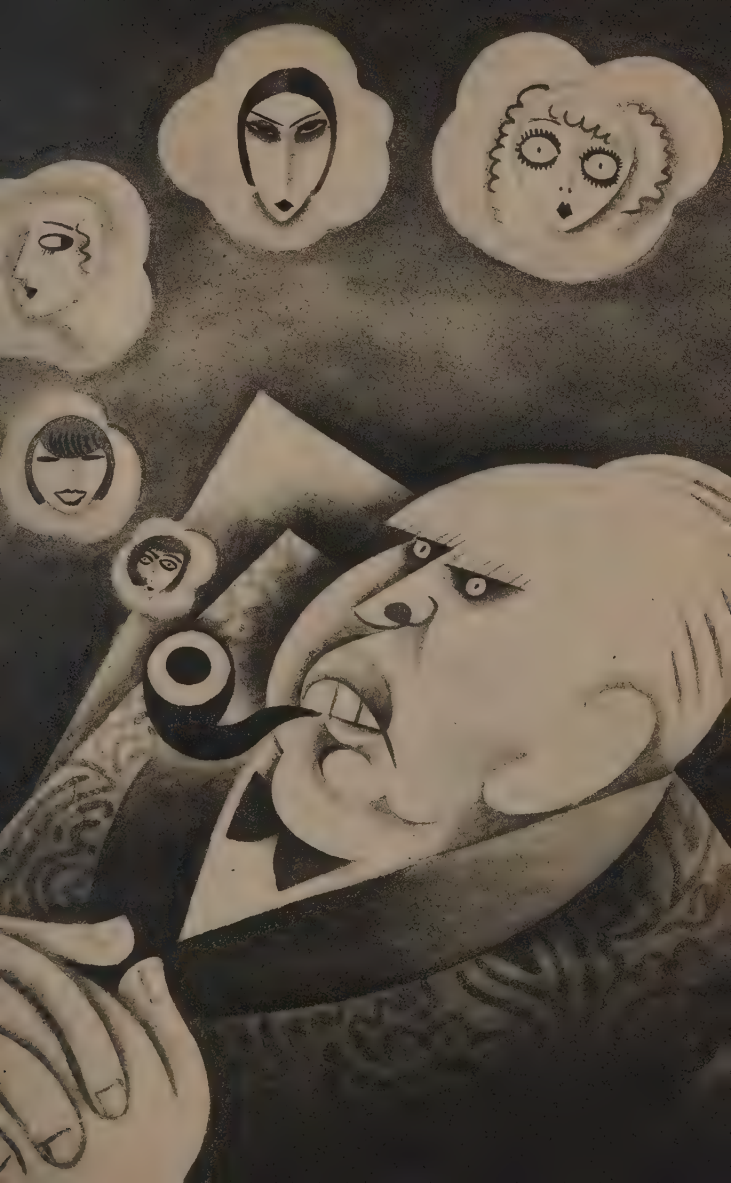
He adjusted his monocle.

"'A Gallery of Dreiser,'" he read. "Most amazin'! Dreiser's last effort, if I recall, was a book of twelve reminiscences of past *amours,* gathered together under the title of 'A Gallery of Women'! In this new volume"—he skimmed the pages swiftly—"we seem to have these same sentimental scenes, as they might have been presented instead *if the twelve pilloried ladies had written in his own style about Mr. Dreiser.* There's poetic justice for you!"

"Tat for tit," nodded Markham.

THEODORE DREISER

In reminiscent mood, his yellow-button shoes resting upon the mantle and his bulldog pipe clamped between his jaws, the sentimental author of "A Gallery of Women" thumbs tenderly over the pages of Memory's Album, ere he tears them out with a sigh and sends them down one by one to the printer's.



"Read it," cried Heath hoarsely. "There may be a clue."

Vance lit a *Régie* and opened the latest volume:

A GALLERY OF DREISER

By the Twelve Heroines of "A Gallery of Women"

I

BY OLIVE BRAND

When I think of him, I visualize a cement-mixer, mixing cement. And somehow I think of a grain elevator, large and ponderous and very uninteresting. Also, I think of many men at work digging a foundation, or laying bricks, or shovelling coal, all day long. Also, I think of canned spinach. Also, I think of the tap dripping in the kitchen sink, drip, drip, drip. Also, I think of sheep jumping over a fence, first one sheep and then another sheep and then another sheep and then another sheep, by which same time I am so sleepy that I shut the book and stop thinking about him, though.

BY REINA

First impressions are keenest. When I first met Theodore I thought he was a novelist, and yet not quite. He was a steady plodder with an infinite patience, a practical knowledge of words and skilled in their preparation for the market, and a way of appearing in two volumes, boxed, which gave the impression that there was something valuable inside. At least, I said, he is a writer—very much that. Anyone who sets down 500,000 words is a writer, if only a bad one.

But if his novels were dull, his grammar was worse. Unless cautioned he would use *where* for *whereas, which* for *a fact that, which same* for *which, to wholeheartedly help* for *wholeheartedly to help,* and some other of those amusing Americanisms beloved by those who constitute the rank, if not file, of American writers. Mrs. Malaprop at her worst wasn't a patch. "He was described to me as a man who browbeat his wife (where he was afraid of other men)" (*Page 11*). "Rhoda had not seen Reina for five years, herself having married" (*Page 12*).

"She was greatly troubled lest I conceive queer notions concerning her and her parents, which was only partly true" (*Page 17*). "Prompted to wholeheartedly help him do this" (*Page 31*). "If I were to devote one hundred pages to verbatim transcripts of subsequent conversations between her and Sven, and which same she invariably forced upon him . . ." (*Page 41*). "The air fairly sizzled with badinage as to the why and the whenceness of this, that and the other . . ." (*Page 67*).

This is typical of much that I listened to for pages and pages, and in spite of anything and everything done to make him see the error of his ways. Grammar was not to be impressed upon Theodore, himself thinking, it seems, he was above the same as seeming to at last have arrived into a style.

That I was shocked at this clumsy and careless prose, even while it amused me, was obvious, myself having heard so much of the wonderful if not interesting Theodore, where he had never been all or maybe any of the things the critics said of him, really. In consequence, whenever he called on me, I tried to talk with him

in the same bad grammar which he could understand. Ya bet!—his favorite expression. Everything was either "classy" or "nobby" or "the cat's whiskers," or even—I blush to repeat a tithe of all the amazing expressions I used to make him feel at home—"23 fer you, Skiddo!" or "Upsedaisy!" And as a result of all my effort to be congenial, he writes a story about me, in which he says that I use bad grammar!

People who live in glass houses should dress in the dark. Ya betcha.

BY LUCIA

Once I had a man named Theodore arrested in Metuchen, N. J., on a Peeping Tom charge, but he said in court that his last name was Smith. I doubt if he could have been the same one.

BY ELLEN ADAMS WRYNN

I first came to know him while he was editing one of the several magazines for which from time to time I illustrated. Though not widely known, I was doing general illustration at the time in order to obtain sufficient money to pur-

sue my more important art dreams, and he wrote me himself and asked me to come to see him. I did. He was a man of about fifty years, in a sharkskin business suit, heavily built, yet not stout, wearing tan shoes, with gray hair, size number 11½, also suspenders, for he did not have on his vest though it was winter (where others might have been cold), but smiled at me with thick lips, unattractive, I thought. But I sat in his lap, or ran my fingers through his hair, he smiling and ordering more illustrations every minute, because I needed the money. And would he drop in at my studio some time, I asked, and I would be glad to show him some other things I had, which same he might like to purchase also for his magazine. A girl must live, I thought, gritting my teeth, by damn!

Thereafter day after day, pretending he wanted to buy more drawings (although, as I discovered in due time, he had long since left the employ of the magazine), he would call at my studio at all hours, on the excuse that he was wishing to see how my work was progressing, if at all. Then he would kiss me and I would

sell him another drawing, because I needed the money, but my husband, as I learned, resented his snooping around our apartment, listening through keyholes or even, as he did frequently, taking our personal letters out of the waste-basket and reading them, and insisted that I should get rid of him, and that soon.

"This is going too far," said McKail, my husband. "Last night I found him inside the grandfather's clock, and this morning while you were taking your bath he was under the tub, making notes."

"I know it," sighed I. "I am getting afraid to crack a boiled egg for fear I will find him inside."

"I've got it," said McKail, my husband. "I will tell him you have run away and left me, and when he goes to write the story you and I can sneak off to Paris and start life over anew."

So that is why for fifteen years he has had no word—nothing—from Ellen Adams Wrynn.

BY IDA HAUCHAWOUT

When I knew Theodore, I thought he was the plumber. I remember that every morning when

I took a bath, he used to sit on the soapdish and write busily on a piece of paper. I thought nothing of it at the time, assuming merely that he was taking measurements on a new washer for the hot-water faucet, but since reading his book I have assumed different, the big tattle-tale. That's what I think of him.

BY ERNITA

He told *me* he was the man who cleaned the windows.

BY REGINA C.

He says I took morphine.

All right.

Maybe I did. Theodore ought to know. Wasn't he always around? Didn't he come poking his nose into all my affairs, until he knew everything I was doing? Didn't he talk to me by the hour, his face close to mine, myself being on his knee, asking in those long endless sentences which same, as I came to presently know, contained not so much ideas as words, really, question after question, or reading aloud to me from his books?

Wouldn't *you* have taken morphine?

BY GIFF, ALBERTINA, RELLA, ERNESTINE, RONA MURTHA, EMANUELA, ESTHER NORN, AND BRIDGET MULLANPHY

Theodore? Theodore? I don't seem to recall the name.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STAR-SPANGLED NICHOLS

(Monday, April 1; 8:33 p. m.)

As Vance concluded reading the volume, Markham strolled disconsolately to the window and stood staring out at the darkened street.

"Unburden, old dear," invited Vance. "You look as serious as St. John of Patmos."

"We're not making headway, Vance," Markham complained with gloomy concern. "I've stood aside all day and permitted you to deal with this case as you saw fit, instead of rushing out to view each successive body, because you insisted so positively that the clue to this horrid business lay right here in this very room. Yet Riddell's murder is as far from a solution as it was when we first entered the library."

"You're an incorrigible pessimist, Markham," Vance returned, seizing a hypodermic needle and giving himself a little shot in the arm. (This was but one of the many tricks he

had picked up from Sherlock Holmes.) "It has been just eleven hours and thirty-three minutes since we found Riddell, and yet there have already been twenty-one murders, in addition to that of Riddell himself. Surely you must admit that the average murder investigation would scarcely have gotten around even to its second or third crime in so short a time. . . ."*

"In the average murder case, however," Markham retorted acidly, "we'd at least have found a lead or two, and outlined a workable routine——"

There was a sharp knock on the door, and Snitkin handed Sergeant Heath another blue envelope.

"How much longer is this rigmarole going to take?" continued Markham nervously. "I can't go on indefinitely waiting for apocalyptic events to happen. Already the anti-administration critics have descended on me like a pack of trolls."

"It will not be much longer, I am sure," com-

*Cf. "The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

forted Vance. "In fact," he added, as Heath opened the blue envelope and surveyed the contents with a brief whistle of amazement, "I much suspect that one of the concludin' events has already taken place."

"Now, here's a hot one," said the Sergeant, glancing up from the cablegram which he had just received, with a puzzled frown. "Some young feller way over in London has just been bumped off with a long sharp instrument. And what's funniest of all is this: He was wearing a rubber-soled tennis shoe on his left foot! Can you beat it?"

"That may not prove so strange as it seems," murmured Vance with an enigmatic smile. "What was his name?"

"It says here he was named Beverley Nichols," said Heath. "Did either of you two men ever hear of him?"

Markham shook his head.

"Wait—of course—" With an eager look, Vance rose and commenced to scan the books intently. "I think I have a theory." He ransacked the shelves hurriedly. "Surely I cannot be mistaken—it must be here somewhere——"

"Second shelf above you," murmured the corpse. "No, more to your left. There!"

With a smile of triumph Vance drew down a mouldy volume.

"'The Star-Spangled Nichols,'" he read. "To be sure! It all fits perfectly."

"I don't understand," said Heath, almost automatically.

"Beverley Nichols, Sergeant," began Vance in explanation, "enjoyed a transient but spectacular distinction as the author of a series of interviews with the great and near-great, first in England and later in America. These were issued last season under the title of 'The Star-Spangled Manner.'"

A glint of comprehension was dawning in Markham's eye.

"In each of these interviews," continued Vance, "the subject of the interview invariably proved just a little less interesting than Beverley himself. And in this book which I am about to read," he concluded, "Beverley brings this fine art of self-interviewing to its ultimate conclusion by writing an interview *in which the subject does not appear at all.*"

He adjusted his monocle.

"Perpend, Markham," he said. "There may well be our missing clue here."

THE STAR–SPANGLED NICHOLS

Seated opposite me was the most brilliant young man I had ever met in my life.

And as I pause, and read again that rather scintillating sentence I have just written, it occurs to me that I detect there a certain mordant brilliance and a flashing rapier-play of wit which, it seems to me, is utterly unequalled in modern literature. Surely no one else could ever have written prose which would have satisfied me so completely. Surely there could be only one person who might, in my own estimation, compare with me. Surely I must be unique.

Yet seated opposite me, as I started this interview, was this young man who seemed to represent so perfectly all that I wished to be. I gazed at him a trifle enviously. He was the epitome of intelligence, the acme of wit, the mirror of fashion, the climax of perception, tact and taste. From his pale lavender eyes to the

tips of his fawn-tinted spats there was nothing about him which I did not admire with all my heart. At last I was face-to-face with my ideal.

A curious problem is presented to the person who finds himself face-to-face with his ideal. Does he, for example, think *you* are the most brilliant young man he has ever met in *his* life? Are *you* the epitome of intelligence, the acme of wit, the mirror of fashion, the climax of perception, tact and taste? From your pale lavender eyes to the tips of your fawn-tinted spats, is there anything about you which *he* does not admire with all his heart? Incidentally, isn't it clever the way I have simply repeated the preceding rather scintillating paragraph word for word? Do you mind if I pause and read it over again to myself?

I joined my finger-tips together and studied the young man before me with increasing admiration. He joined his finger-tips together and studied *me*. I looked him straight in his pale lavender eyes. He looked me straight in *my* pale lavender eyes. I winked. He winked. There seemed to be a perfect sympathy between us. I crossed my left leg. He crossed his right leg.

I took out my watch and wound it. He took out his watch and wound it. We were getting along famously together. I pulled out my bow-tie and let it run back with a snap. He pulled out *his* bow-tie and let it run back with a snap. I pulled my lips apart, pressed my nose flat with my thumb like a Chinaman, and wiggled my ears. He pulled *his* lips apart, pressed his nose flat with his thumb like a Chinaman, and wiggled his ears. I hung my knees over the back of the chair (*this* will stunt him), rested on the bottom rung on one elbow with the chin in the palm of the hand and the forefinger along the cheek, balanced a lead-pencil on my nose, and whistled the first four bars of *Turkey in the Straw*. He hung *his* knees over the back of the chair and rested on the bottom rung on one elbow with the chin in the palm of the hand of the forefinger of the cheek of the lead-pencil of the nose of the House that Jack Built . . .

And as I pause, and read again that rather scintillating paragraph which I have just written, it occurs to me that if I pause and reread many more scintillating paragraphs, I won't be getting ahead very fast with this interview.

BEVERLEY NICHOLS

With the aid of a stenographer's notebook and an ordinary full-length mirror, our recent polished visitor from London (formerly known as Beverley Nichols) is about to perform his famous Disappearing Interview Act, in which the subject of the interview disappears entirely, leaving only Beverley.

I gazed at him curiously. (He gazed at *me* curiously.) What was his position in society? Had his unnaturally sensitive nostrils sniffed out day by day the correct Lists in which his name should be included? Had he proposed himself for all the Clubs That Matter? Had the Best People invited him to their receptions, on his own invitation? Had he ever attended the Albert Hall Ball in a box which contained, in addition to himself, such comparatively minor figures as the Prince of Wales, Thelma Morgan Converse, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Philip Sassoon, the Emir of Afghanistan, Countess Folke-Bernadotte, Mr. James Hazen Hyde (twice), Havelock Ellis, Mme. Dubonnet, and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt?

Had he, for example, ever interviewed Lindbergh? Poor "Lindy"; a rather good aviator, as I recall, but I shall never forget the wistful appeal in his eyes as he gripped my hand and said: "Ah, Nichols, if you would *only* teach me to fly!"

Had he interviewed Henry Ford? Did he remember, as I did, the look of mingled admiration and envy which crossed the face of that

rather efficient automobile manufacturer when he was introduced to me? "So this is Beverley Nichols," he said. "I've always wanted to meet Beverley Nichols. Nay, more—I've always wanted to *be* Beverley Nichols. If I had your brains," he sighed, "I'd be a wealthy man today."

Had he known Charlie Chaplin? Had he, too, seen beneath the tinsel a heart of gold? (Had he, for that matter, ever been able to toss off a neat figure of speech like that, practically with the back of his hand?) And had he heard the break in the voice of that rather amusing motion-picture actor as he said to me: "I try to be the funniest man in America, Beverley—but you *are* the funniest man in America"?

Had he heard Jack Dempsey whisper to him, in the shy manner which is characteristic of that rather adequate pugilist: "Say, Nick, sometime show me how to box. Huh?"

Had Calvin Coolidge, the rather retiring ex-President of the United States, sighed to him over the breakfast table: "Beverley, I'd give up my choice to run in 1932 if you would only consent to become an American citizen"?

Was he sufficiently impressed by all these names? Was he properly overwhelmed by such a list of rather important people whom I had done the honor of interviewing? I studied his face carefully. Our glances met. There was no more sign of astonishment in his eyes than there was in my own.

So that was his game! Well, my proud fellow, two can play at that as well as one. If he desired to simulate boredom and pretend an indifference to the overwhelming charms of my magnetic personality, I could do as much toward his. So far I had made all the advances in this interview; he had not even said a word. Now let him make a few attempts to impress *me*. In the meantime I could sit back and snub him, snub for snub.

I yawned. He yawned. Very good, my bucko! My head nodded forward. His head nodded forward. Oh, it *did,* did it! I shaded my eyes with my hand. He shaded *his* eyes. There was a loaded silence.

Come, my fine fellow! A little of this is enough. Beverley Nichols has never been treated this way in his life. I peeked cautiously through

the fingers of my hand, just in time to catch him peeking cautiously through the fingers of *his* hand.

I glanced up quickly. He glanced up quickly. We glared at each other. I half rose. He half rose. I shook my fist. He shook his fist. "You cad!" we shouted simultaneously.

With a choked cry of rage I reached for my book, and hurled it forward at him with all my might. There was a terrific crash, a splintering of glass with a dull thud; and before my astonished eyes stood only the shattered remains of a full-length mirror, the jagged bits still clinging to the frame.

The young man before me had vanished. . . .

* * *

I had vanished.

CHAPTER XVII

EX MARKS THE SPOT

(Monday, April 1; 9:14 p. m.)

As Vance concluded reading, Markham buried his head in his hands.

"It's horrible—horrible," he moaned. "The whole case strikes me as a series of senseless acts committed by a maniac running amuck."

Vance shook his head.

"Our criminal is supersane, Markham. And his acts are not senseless; they're hideously logical and precise. True, they have been conceived with a grim and terrible humor, with a tremendously cynical attitude; but within themselves they are exact and rational."

Markham regarded Vance thoughtfully.

"How can you explain this brutal murder of an unknown author in London who to all intents and purposes had already ceased to exist?" he asked. "In what way can that be regarded as logical? To me it's a nightmare, unrelated to sanity——"

The sharp tinkling of the telephone in his own pocket interrupted his sentence. He snatched up the instrument impatiently, and lifted the receiver.

"Hello. Yes, this is the District Attorney speaking. Who is this? The Morgue?" He straightened abruptly in his chair, and his voice was crisp. *"Forty-seven?"*

He faced Vance with ashen face, and for a moment he tried in vain to speak.

"The Morgue has just called to say they have received forty-seven unidentified bodies," he gasped at length, "each stabbed through the heart, and each wearing on its left foot a rubber-soled tennis shoe!"

We stared at him in frozen horror.

"Forty-seven!" choked Heath. "Say, this case has gone a little too far!"

"One moment, Markham!" Vance rose with a look of intent eagerness on his thin face. "Did you say that these bodies are all unidentified?"

"Absolutely," admitted Markham. "We have no clue to who they are. Even their jackets are all alike."

With a nod of comprehension Vance crossed

the library swiftly to a tall case marked "Anonymous." From a high shelf he drew down a large volume.

"Before I read you the clue to this latest holocaust," he said considerately, "perhaps I should explain briefly the background of the present situation."

Markham and Heath seated themselves obediently before him.

"During the past season," Vance began, lighting a *Régie* languidly, "novel-writing in America seems to have struck a windfall. For years our lesser fiction-writers struggled in vain to create so much as one real person in our native literature; and then one day, glancing about them in despair, these harassed writers suddenly made the unique discovery that there were something like 124,000,000 real persons about them here in America, and all they needed to do was to mention an actual name and presto! they would have a real lifelike character for their novels, all ready-made, thus saving tremendous wear and tear on their literary imaginations, as well as insuring their novels at least one ardent reader.

"From this beginning the idea has swept literary America like new brooms. Each day the presses turn out more and more novels of New York and Chicago and Hollywood which include all the current Broadway celebrities (either by name or by reputation), list some anonymous scandals, tell over (and over) the sacred beads of the Algonquin Rosary, mention with nice tact each literary critic, and name Walter Winchell at least four times. And these real persons in turn, far from being offended at being thus rudely conscripted to furnish local color for their friends' novels, have rushed out themselves to gather this literary hay while the sun shines and have written still more novels mentioning their contemporaries, until the whole literary life in New York has come to resemble a vast, if vicious, circle, marching around and around in lockstep with hands on shoulders, like a Rotary picnic, all humming to themselves that old, old chant: 'Merrily we roll a log, roll a log, roll a log. . . .'

"Last but not least," continued Vance, "in order to give the appearance of scandal, and make it seem that their confessions are too

packed with dynamite to allow them to risk baring their own names, these new authors invariably have signed their books 'Anonymous.' As a result, we have had a growing crop of novels bearing such varied titles as 'Ex-Wife,' 'Ex-Husband,' 'Ex-Mistress,' 'Ex-It' . . ."

"And the volume in your hand?" prompted Markham.

"The present volume is entitled 'Ex Marks the Spot,'" explained Vance. "Encouraged by the critical murmurs of 'How lifelike!' which have arisen as the reviewers, one by one, have recognized their own names in print, the author of this latest tome has offered here his own Big Confession Novel of New York, wherein, according to the current custom, he hints at several ambiguous affairs with thinly disguised celebrities, mentions all the critics, and includes enough other New York names to insure him at least of selling out his edition.

"The book, I scarcely need add," concluded Vance, "is signed 'Anonymous.'"

"Read it," urged Heath gruffly. "Perhaps we'll discover the clue at last."

Vance lit another *Régie* and began:

EX MARKS THE SPOT

Chapter One:

Never shall I forget the fatal day that K., my wife, decided to leave me. One moment I was living in a world of happiness, my career, my home, my future all assured; the next my dreams were crashing about my ears. To be sure, my wife had once been the mistress of a prominent New York publisher in the Upper Forties with a wen on his left thigh, a blonde moustache, and a slight but noticeable lisp, as well as having had an affair with a certain well-known Broadway producer wearing a striped blue suit, yellow shoes, light gray felt hat, and answering to the name of Harry; but that had all been before I married her. I had never thought that K.—my K.—could cease to love me!

At the time that she broke the news to me, I had been blissfully reading the newspapers in our cozy little apartment. One moment I was enjoying the entertaining columns of Broun, Sullivan, F. P. A., Hope, Winchell, Crouse,

Phillips, Hellinger, Johnson, Sobol, McIntyre, O'Hara. (*Note to Printer:* Check up on newspaper columnists and add any names I may have omitted.) The next I was plunged in despair.

"I am leaving you," K. announced casually.

"You cannot leave me," I gasped. "What shall I do without you? Who will support me?"

"Support yourself," she replied callously. "Get a job as a dramatic critic like Kelcey Allen, John Anderson, J. Brooks Atkinson, Whitney Bolton, Robert Benchley, John Mason Brown, Charles Darnton, Rowland Field, Gilbert Gabriel, Robert Garland, Percy Hammond, Robert Littell, Burns Mantle, George Jean Nathan, Arthur Pollock, Gilbert Seldes, Alison Smith, Walter Winchell, Richard Watts, Alexander Woollcott (*Note to Printer:* Add any others that you can think of). Get a job as a literary critic like Harry Hansen, Carl Van Doren, Isabel Paterson, Joseph Wood Krutch, Henry Seidel Canby, Burton Rascoe, William Soskin, John Carter, Percy Hutchinson, Louis Kronenberger, Mary Rennels, Jonathan Edwards, William Benét, Christopher Morley, Will Cuppy, Agnes Smith, William Allen White, George

berg, Fanny Butcher, J. Donald Adams, Walter Yust, Henry Hazlitt, Edwin Francis Edgett, Llewellyn Jones, Richard Massock, Joseph Henry Jackson, John Chamberlain, Sidney Williams, Howard Vincent O'Brien, Thomas Masson, Dorothea Lawrence Mann, Bruce Catton, Ted Robinson, John Clair Minot, Donald Davidson, Edward Weeks, William Benét, Christopher Morley, Will Cuppy, Agnes Smith, William Allen White, George Currie, William Lyon Phelps, Bob Sherwood, David Cort, H. L. Mencken, Kerry Scott, Laurence Stallings, Harry Salpeter, Ward Marsh, Elrick Davis, Nat Ferber, Ted Shane, Baird Leonard, Walter Winchell, John Neihardt, Lincoln Colcord (*Note to Printer:* Do you think of any others?). Get a job as a motion-picture critic (*Note to Printer:* Fill these in yourself).

"You are leaving me for someone else," I accused her bitterly. "You are going to live with a certain notorious newspaper columnist on a New York tabloid, short, thick-set, thirty-three years of age, with a deep baritone voice."

"On the contrary," she denied hotly, "I am leaving because of your affair with a well-

known Broadway model, blonde, vivacious, of immigrant extraction, the curves of whose soft body excite male appetites to unholy passion and the letters of whose name, if rearranged, would spell 'Obelisk.' "

I looked her accusingly in the eye.

"That is not true," I said slowly. "I have heard on authentic source that you love another —a prominent motion-picture actor from Hollywood—who is it? John Gilbert? Lionel Barrymore? Victor McLaglen? Buddy Rogers? Richard Arlen? Louis Wolheim? Karl Dane? William Haines? Bull Montana? Eddie Quillan? Charles Chaplin? Raymond Griffith? William Powell? George O'Brien? William S. Hart? Walter Winchell? Lon Chaney?——"

"Stop!" she interrupted. (*Note to Printer:* Inasmuch as she interrupts me here, we don't have to finish the above list.) "Do you suppose I am ignorant of your *own* scandalous behavior? What tongue on Broadway has failed to link your name with Lenore Ulric, Ethel Barrymore, Helen Morgan, Florence Nash, Mary Nash, Clare Eames, Mrs. Fiske, Margalo Gillmore, Pauline Lord, Katharine Cornell, Helen Hayes, Lynn Fontanne, Beatrice Lillie, Marilyn

Walter Winchell, Queenie Smith, Mrs. Thomas Whiffen (*Note to Printer:* And the rest of Equity's list)."

We faced each other defiantly.

"Then it is—good-by?" I asked.

The slam of the door in my face was her only answer.

Chapter Two:

She was gone! K. was gone! I was alone—terribly, horribly alone. Where should I go? Where should I eat? To whom could I turn? Disconsolately I seized my hat and stick, descended to the street, hailed a cab. Life was closing in on me. Alone!

"To the Algonquin," I told the driver.

For a moment I stood in the familiar lobby and gazed half-heartedly at the well-known faces crowded about the famous Round Table: George Kaufman, Marc Connolly, Harold Ross, Dorothy Parker, Douglas Fairbanks, Heywood Broun, Alexander Woollcott, Robert Benchley, Charles Brackett, Frank Sullivan, Clarence Knapp, Barney Dougall, Jimmy Durante, Rebecca West, Alison Smith, Russel Crouse, Charles

MacArthur, Ben Hecht, Edna Ferber, Fannie Hurst, Neysa McMein, Brock Pemberton, Peter Arno, George Abbott, Percy Crosby, Sidney Howard, George Chappell, Rollin Kirby, Jack Shuttleworth, Deems Taylor, Theodore Dreiser, Ruth Hale, Sherwood Anderson, Norman Anthony, John Held, Ralph Barton, Donald Ogden Stewart, Katherine Ursula Parrott, Lindsay Parrott, Hugh O'Connor, Alice Hughes, Walter Winchell, Reinald Werrenrath, Fitzhugh Green, George Palmer Putnam, John Farrar, Ray Long, H. N. Swanson, William Seabrook, William McFee, Joan Lowell, Guy Holt, Katherine Brush, Don Marquis, Russell Patterson, Jefferson Machamer, Eugene O'Neill. (*Note to Printer:* That should be enough to give you the general idea.)

I turned sadly and went out the door again.

Chapter Three:

Fifth Avenue!

On all sides as I strolled north a procession of familiar faces streamed past me one by one, faces from all walks of life. Henry Ford. Mayor Walker. Jack Dempsey. Clarence Darrow. Her-

bert Bayard Swope. Thomas A. Edison. Clarence Chamberlain. John D. Rockefeller. Ida M. Tarbell. Babe Ruth. President Hoover. Lee Shubert. Walter Winchell. Bishop Cannon. Harry Sinclair. George Gershwin. (*Note to Printer:* Add here the entire list of names from *Who's Who.*)

I felt so utterly alone.

Chapter Four:

In desperation I hurried into the crowded lobby of the Plaza, nodding briefly to Secretary of State Stimson, John Coolidge, the Dolly Sisters, and Colonel Lindbergh. I must speak to someone. I must fill the gaping wound in my heart. I must discover one sympathetic soul who would fill K.'s place. Oh, K.!

In an agony of loneliness I lifted the nearest copy of the New York Telephone Directory, and my eye wandered listlessly down the file of names: A.A.A.A.1 Real Estate, A.A. Aaron Charcoal Company, A.A.A. Safe Moving Company, A.B.C. Nurse Registry, A.B.C. Stable Manure Company, Aabac Company, Aagenas Arthur, Aalbue Raymond P., Aalholm Rosalie

Miss, Aalto Anna Miss, Aan Peter, Aarcher Cabot and Cartier Inc chems & engrs (*Note to Printer:* Just keep on writing down all the names until you reach Zzyzz R. Cantarrana, then count up the number of people mentioned, and print exactly that many copies).

CHAPTER XVIII

AVE ATQUE VALLÉE

(Monday, April 1; 10:26 p. m.)

The silence which ensued in the doomed library as this latest volume wound to its dread close was only broken by the meditative drumming of the corpse's fingers on a book in his hand, the drone of traffic in the street below, and the persistent blast of a loud-speaker in a radio shop on the opposite curb, through which Rudy Vallée was crooning one of his sentimental lullabies.

"Look here, Vance," challenged Markham at last. "You told me quite emphatically that as soon as you had a little more evidence—a few additional clues—you'd understand all the phases of this gigantic plot. It appears to me, however, that this last wholesale slaughter has simply plunged us more deeply into uncertainty."

Vance shook his head seriously in disagreement.

"The stabbin' of Dreiser and the wholesale killin' of these recent Anonymous authors have illuminated the one moot point in the plot."

Markham looked up sharply.

"You think you know now what the plot is?"

Vance carefully fitted a *Régie* into a long jet holder.

"Yes, Markham," he returned slowly; "I think I know now what the plot is. And when the thing that I expect to happen to-night occurs, I can, I believe, bare to you at last the whole devilish and almost incredible truth."

He spoke with impressive solemnity; and Markham, I could see, was strongly influenced by his manner. Across the street the radio abruptly ceased. The library was strangely silent.

"Have you any definite notion," inquired Markham, "what that final touch will prove to be?"

"Oh, quite. Just what shape it will take I don't know. But it will centre about one specific person——"

Above the hum of traffic rose the slow, lugubrious voice of a radio announcer.

"And when do you figure this final clue will turn up?" persisted Markham, ignoring the interruption.

"At almost any moment." Vance spoke in low, level and quiet tones. "I beg of you to listen to the words of this radio announcement."

"—vast invisible audience," continued the hollow voice of the broadcaster, "will doubtless be shocked to learn of a most unfortunate accident which has just occurred during the rendition of our programme this evening. Mr. Rudy Vallée——"

Vance and the corpse exchanged significant glances.

"—has just been discovered lying in front of his microphone, stabbed through the heart with a long sharp instrument——"

"My good God!" burst Heath in horror.

"—curious fact," continued the voice of the announcer, "that on his left foot was a rubber-soled tennis shoe——"

"Vance!" Markham rose accusingly. *"You expected this!"*

Heath and Markham stared at him, the sud-

den dawn of a horrified suspicion in their eyes.

Vance took a deep drag from his *Régie* and smiled languidly.

"I was not the only one," he nodded. "Apparently Riddell has anticipated the event likewise. I beg of you to look at the book in his hand."

Markham and Heath rushed over to the corpse and seized the proffered volume.

" 'Ave Atque Vallée,' " they read simultaneously.

They swung around and faced Vance with awful comprehension.

"As you are doubtless aware," explained Vance, returning their accusing stares casually, "the late Mr. Vallée recently published his autobiography under the title 'Vagabond Dreams Come True.' " He yawned. "This volume would seem to be in the same tradition."

"Read it!" choked Heath hoarsely. "No matter which of us is guilty," and he gazed at Vance narrowly, "we'll soon know now!"

Vance rose and adjusted his monocle leisurely.

"Perpend, gentlemen," he sighed. "It is our last clue ere I reveal—the truth":

AVE ATQUE VALLÉE

(EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the authentic autobiography of Riddy Vallée, and has been entirely written by himself. In addition, one or two of the facts contained in this autobiography are said to be based on actual incidents in the author's own life.*)

Dedicated to
the one person whose unflagging
admiration, sympathy and encouragement
have made me what I am to-day:
Riddy Vallée

I am generally admitted to be the most popular young man in America. While this fact does not seem particularly strange to me, nevertheless it seems to have caused certain persons, usually jealous husbands or boy-friends of young ladies who have succumbed helplessly to my charms, to express a certain vague wonder at my fatal power over women. One or two have even gone so far as to ask me the secret of how I captured the feminine heart.

My answer is simple: hard work!

Hard work, stick-to-itiveness, character, sobriety, truth, courage, faith, hope, charity. Get on the job early. Don't watch the clock. Honesty is the best policy. Don't envy the other fellow; maybe he is envying you. Hit the line. Never say die. Don't put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day. Make hay while the sun shines. Love your work. With these qualities, and my singing voice, you too can be a Riddy Vallée. In fact, if you have the voice, the rest of the qualities don't matter.

Ever since I first achieved the popularity which meets me on every hand to-day, I have been the envy of other men. They have begrudged me the adulation of prostrate females, the orchids and the bouquets, the passionate letters on scented note-paper, the offers of marriage, the applause and embraces and kisses which have been, alas! my lot. They have sneered when I stirred all flapperdom as it has never been stirred before. They mocked my title of Vagabond Lover—America's Dream Come True!

Yet little do these husbands and boy-friends, who regard me so enviously, realize that in my

RUDY VALLÉE

Clasping his adored microphone in impassioned embrace and crooning into it the sad, sad autobiography of a misunderstood career, we see the romantic figure of Yale's most popular graduate, known to a vast invisible audience of prostrate females as America's Dream Come True, Ho hum, everybody, ho hum.

I am a vagabond lover

heart lurks a tragedy beside which their own petty jealousies fade into nothingness. Little do they reck the canker in my bosom. For the first time I can reveal the secret disappointment which has sorrowed my whole life.

I have never heard my own voice!

How can my eager listeners, sitting in rapt attention before their radios each evening while I sing, realize the pang and heartache which is mine? Lucky souls! they have but to twist a dial to hear my clear voice, so full of magnetism, of pathos, and of life; but I, on the other end, must stand all night, crooning through my microphone into space, witnessing my golden tones whisked away relentlessly into the ether, forever deprived of that priceless opportunity which is the privilege of the meanest of my followers. The tragedy of the blind Milton, the deaf Beethoven, the star quarterback with Athlete's Foot, all these fade in comparison. In vain I try to listen to my voice when I am performing; the sound of my own singing invariably drowns it out. In vain I cease suddenly, hoping to capture at least a tiny lingering syllable; but the voice stops as suddenly as I. Truly, the great

American public little realizes the sacrifices which its heroes must make in order to carry on their work.

Yet the reader must not assume from this intimate confession that I do not love my work. On the contrary, I enjoy every minute of my day, and every new job that I tackle is a fresh source of pleasure to me. If it were not for this eternal spirit of ebullient youth, I fear I should be unable to maintain the boyish zest and enthusiasm which wrings so many feminine hearts. I think that love of one's work is the greatest thing in the world.

Yet the reader must not assume from the fact that I love my work, that my path to success has been an easy one. On the other hand it has only been by patience, diligent application, and steady plugging that I have been enabled to conquer almost insuperable odds and achieve my place at the head of my profession to-day. My success is not the result of any lucky chance, but is rather the product of long hours, gruelling study, and industry, coupled with a sense of humor, the will to win, and fifteen minutes of study each day devoted to the works of Ho-

ratio Alger, the Merriwell Series, and "The Rover Boys in Business."

It is in order that the reader may not assume any of these false conclusions, but may appreciate both the joys and the tribulations of the Path to Fame, that I have prepared this little story of my life.

My undergraduate career at Yale was not exactly a bed of roses. Previous to my graduation from Yale—I am a Yale man, I may add—I was forced to spend most of my time at Yale indulging in a number of menial tasks which were necessary in working my way through Yale. I feel that my usual daily schedule would have staggered any ordinary Yale undergraduate. Two hours of each day, for example, were given over to shaking the furnaces in all the fraternity houses. For three hours daily I waited on tables. Seven hours of each day I spent earning a minor pittance by plucking dandelions from the Yale Bowl. Fourteen hours I devoted to my orchestra, training and coaching the Yale undergraduates and forming the band which was destined later to earn for me both fame and fortune. Nine hours daily I practised

upon the saxophone, and two hours each on the pianoforte and clarinet. Add to this total about three hours spent travelling to and from the surrounding towns where our band was hired to perform; and the reader will realize that I had comparatively few hours left each day for study, sleep, and flushing my saxophone.

Yet this habit of good hard work, which I acquired when I was an undergraduate at Yale (which I attended), served to form the foundation for a life of industry and unfailing effort; and indeed my present-day routine makes these earlier schedules at Yale seem almost like summer vacations by comparison. As I have so often put it, I am really busier than the proverbial one-eyed dog in a sausage shop. Yet I feel that nothing is worth while which is not worth working for; and the greatest thing in the world is good hard *work!*

It was the same little orchestra which I first founded at Yale that later became the famous "Riddy Vallée and his Band." To be sure, immediately after my graduation (I graduated from Yale) I discharged all the other boys except myself; but the nucleus was still there, and

by surrounding myself with a few capable musicians who did not play too loud to drown my own charms, I was ready at last to set out on my first professional venture.

At this point it may be of interest to my possible admirers to explain how I first acquired my name. For some time I had been an earnest admirer of Rudy Vallée, the orchestra leader and singer, whose life I felt in many ways paralleled my own; and so devout did my admiration become that my friends began in jest to call me "Riddy Vallée." As a result I soon decided to retain this name, feeling somehow that it was a little more romantic than my native name of Schmalzburg.

I was now on the verge of my great success. I knew my own talent, of course; and all that remained was to convince the rest of the public that I was as great as I seemed to myself. (I am still working on this.) It was at this moment in my career that the idea of the megaphone first occurred to me; and to this device, *which hid my face completely,* I feel I owe to a large extent my popularity to-day. Sometimes I also wear a padded vest and wire mask, like a baseball umpire.

Perhaps one of the greatest secrets of the success of my orchestra has been our originality in introducing novelty or "stunt" numbers, replete with comedy. In our Naval Melody, for example, we have a funny scene where everyone puts on a sailor hat, one of the sailors spits out some supposedly bad liquor that explodes when it touches the floor (a simple stunt worked by flashlight powder), there is a fake storm at sea, and for our climax a seasick passenger makes for the lifeboats wearing a bathrobe and carrying a hot-water bottle. In this number we play some genuine naval chanties. In our Army Medley, on the other hand, we all wear steel helmets, imitate airplanes on our saxophones, fire toy pistols, and end by singing *Over There* and then playing *Taps*. In other numbers we wear cat hats, devil hats, Scotch hats, and Hawaiian costumes. I only mention these things to prove that a keen sense of humor is absolutely necessary in a successful orchestra like mine.

This autobiography would not be complete, moreover, without a tribute to the loyal efforts of "the boys," as I call them, to live up to the

reputation of their leader. To be sure, I consider that their task is really a pleasure, since they should be grateful for the privilege of being a member of a genuine Riddy Vallée Band. After all, I ask little enough of them, inasmuch as they are able to remain sitting down all evening with nothing to do but play their instruments and watch me—surely no very difficult task—while I, on the other hand, must stand in front of the microphone all night, crooning, smiling, bowing, shaking hands with celebrities, accepting the flowers and adoration of beautiful women, acknowledging the applause, and attending to the hundred-and-one other wearying tasks for which I alone am responsible.

Last but not least, I should like to conclude this book by replying, once and for all, to the constant demand made by my feminine followers: *What Is My Dream Girl?* To me, the Ideal Woman must be either blonde or brunette, unless of course her hair happens to be red. I do not care what color her eyes are, provided that there are two of them, one on either side of her nose. She must be short, or tall, beauti-

ful, intelligent, since mere physical charm alone can never hold a man, she must be a good dancer, admire housework, not be afraid of good hard work, cook, bake, sew, play, sing and love simple home things—the kind of girl that married dear old Dad. I trust that I have not offended any of the girls who have written me by this specific description, but I always try to be frank and honest. I think that honesty is one of the greatest things in the world.

Yet sometimes, as I stand to-day surrounded by the garlands of fame, with millions of women begging to touch my hand, with adulation and worship such as few human beings have experienced before, still I feel that I am not satisfied. How often, as I stand upon the stage and bow to salvo after salvo of applause, do I long for those good old days when I was an unknown undergraduate at Yale! How often, when I am guest of honor at a vast public banquet, do I long for the quiet seclusion of a home-cooked dinner in the old family kitchen. How often, as I wave my baton in the centre of the spotlight, have I yearned once again to be a simple saxophone player, concealed somewhere

in the last row of a hundred-piece orchestra, far from the madding crowd!

How often?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: *For the best answer to the question "How often?" Riddy Vallée will give away an autographed photograph of himself, said to be the only one of its kind in existence.*)

CHAPTER XIX

"THE MURDERER IS ——"

(Monday, April 1; 11:59 p. m.)

As Vance concluded the last volume, we stared at him with mounting suspicion. The devitalizing effects of this long, tireless campaign of extinction showed in him now only too plainly. There were shadowed circles around his eyes; his mouth was drawn; and even his shoulders sagged wearily. But, despite his general air of exhaustion, the points of his eyes burned with an almost fanatic brilliance.

Markham leaned forward, his face tense, still unwilling to believe ill of his old friend, tortured with doubt.

"Now you will tell the truth?"

"Yes, Markham, I will tell the truth," came the quiet answer. "I fear there is no doubt left who has been at the bottom of this fiendish affair; but even now—when it is so nearly over—I can scarcely utter the facts. Everything in me revolts against revealing the shocking depths of

this depravity. I'm afraid to tell. . . . Dash it all, I'm getting mellow. Middle-age has crept upon me." He attempted to force a smile, but failed.

Markham waited in silence.

"Better spill everything, Mr. Vance," urged Heath. (I noticed that the grizzled old Sergeant's eyes had filmed with a suspicious moisture.)

Vance gazed for a moment at the two inexorable figures before him, and then reached nervously for a *Régie*. His cigarette case was empty. With a resigned shrug he lifted his eyes slowly.

"You're right," he sighed. "The plot is over now. I'll tell all."

He reached in his pocket, and drew out a sheaf of papers.

"During this investigation," he began, "I have set down briefly and chronologically all the outstanding facts of the John Riddell Murder Case—that is, I have noted each important external factor of the ghastly picture whose fantastic images are at last about to take on the aspects of hideous realities."

He held out the papers to Markham.

"The truth lies somewhere in that list. When you put the facts together—relate them to one another with their correct values—you will know who has been the agent of this orgy of crime."

Markham took the summary without a word. Heath leaned over his shoulder, and together they read the document through in ominous silence. Herewith is a verbatim reproduction of it:

GENERAL FACTS:

1. An atmosphere of relentless hatred pervades the Riddell library.

2. Riddell was a nagging, complaining, pitiless critic, making life miserable for all the authors he encountered.

3. To his library have come all the best-sellers of the past year.

4. Slink admits that Riddell received them here alone.

5. According to Frank Crowninshield, Riddell was a book reviewer for *Vanity Fair*.

6. Any one of the best-sellers which he reviewed might have had ample occasion to desire his demise.

7. Riddell is discovered in his library at 9:03 a. m., the victim of a fatal attack of acute boredom.

8. The best-sellers of the past year are all in the room with him at the time.

9. His murder is first discovered by Philo Vance.

THE CRIMES:

10. Philo Vance proves to share many of Riddell's prejudices during his initial investigation of the contents of the library.

11. He first gives the clue to the murder of Jim Tully.

12. In discussing Tully's murder, Vance shows himself strangely conversant with the facts of Tully's literary past.

13. The corpse appears to be highly amused by the whole proceeding.

14. Philo Vance, in turn, first discovers one after another the remaining sixty-eight murders that form the basis of the plot.

15. In each case, he shows this same suspicious familiarity with the literary past of the deceased.

DISTRIBUTABLE FACTS:

16. Philo Vance has admitted in several previous cases, notably "The Bishop Murder Case" and "The Scarab Murder Case," that he voluntarily shifted the poisons, influenced the Egyptian servant, or otherwise arranged for the death of one of the main characters.

17. Neither Vance nor the corpse has shown any genuine surprise at the literary slaughter enacted in this gruesome library.

18. On the contrary, the corpse has repeatedly offered to assist in discovering additional clues, and once or twice has even gone over to the shelves and selected the tell-tale volume in person.

19. Vance has proved very familiar with these volumes, and has always read them aloud with apparent relish.

20. The corpse once tried to throw the whole investigation off the track by introducing a red herring in Chapter XIV.

21. Philo Vance knew Peggy Hopkins Joyce's private telephone number offhand.

22. Each of the victims was stabbed through the heart with a long sharp instrument.

23. Each was discovered wearing John Riddell's *left* tennis shoe.

24. John Riddell was wearing only his *right* tennis shoe.

25. When Riddell was murdered there were, or could have been, present in the library: John Riddell, Slink, Alexander Woollcott, Edmund Pearson, William Bolitho, Frank Crowninshield, Donald Freeman, Jim Tully, Edward J. O'Brien, Will Rogers, W. R. Burnett, Dashiell Hammett, Edward Sullivan, Charles Francis Coe, MacKinlay Kantor, Bartlett Cormack, Maurine Watkins, Sherwood Anderson, Katherine Brush, Calvin Coolidge, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, Joseph M. March, Robert Frost, Richard Halliburton, Will Durant, Theodore Dreiser, Beverley Nichols, the forty-seven Anonymous authors of the True Confession Books, Rudy Vallée *and Philo Vance.*

When Markham had finished reading the summary, he laid it on the table.

"Yes, Vance," he said, "you've covered the main points pretty thoroughly. But I can't see any coherence in them. In fact, they only seem to emphasize the confusion of the case."

"Yet properly analyzed, Markham, they'll tell you everything you want to know."

Markham glanced again through the pages.

"No matter what person in the list we assume to be guilty, we are at once confronted by a group of contradictory and insurmountable facts. This *précis* could be used just as effectively to prove that everyone concerned is innocent."

"Superficially it appears that way," agreed Vance, "but one must first find the generatin' line of the design, and then relate the subsidi'ry forms of the pattern to it."

Markham made a hopeless gesture.

"If only life were as simple as your æsthetic theories!" He tapped the papers petulantly. "Can *you* make any sense—æsthetic or otherwise—out of this?"

Vance smiled.

"Before I fit together the last stray pieces in this bafflin' puzzle and reveal the truth at last," he said slowly, "may I ask if you have observed carefully the books in this library?"

"My God, Mr. Vance," burst Heath, "we ain't observed nothing else but!"

"And yet, Sergeant," smiled Vance, "with all your thoroughness, you have overlooked the one leading clue of them all!"

He rose and levelled his jet cigarette-holder impressively.

"I beg to call your attention to the set of books in the lap of the corpse!"

With a gasp of amazement Markham and Heath hurried over to the reclining figure in the chair, and lifted the five impressive volumes which the corpse clutched in its hand.

" 'The Collected Works of S. S. Van Dine'!"* read Markham slowly.

"A most amazin' anthology," began Vance. "In these five volumes the author has covered the entire field of present-day criminal investigation. It is a perfect compendium of all possible forms of mystery stories; a summary of every known variety of murder, clue and sleuth-like accessory which is in use by our best-selling criminal authors to-day. It contains a little of Poe; a little of Edgar Wallace; more of J. S.

*"The Benson Murder Case" (Scribners); "The 'Canary' Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Greene Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); "The Bishop Murder Case" (*Ibid.*); and "The Scarab Murder Case" (*Ibid.*).

Fletcher; still more of Conan Doyle. Small wonder it is the world's standard cyclopedia of modern detective fiction!"

He glanced from one to another of us, and his eyes narrowed.

"Markham, every act in the John Riddell Murder Case, every device in this whole plot, every detail, every erudite phrase and characteristic paragraph—*has been copied from these actual pages!*"

Markham and Heath stared speechless.

"We are hardly to be blamed for our inability to guess the murderer, for it was not he alone who was deceiving us; it was the accumulated devices of hundreds of shrewd detective-story writers before us, plus the energetic skill of the world's greatest anthologist—S. S. Van Dine."

Vance paused to light another cigarette.

"Once I had made this discovery," he continued, "the remaining course was simple. I had only to study Van Dine's methods, in order to determine who would be the guilty party here. And therein lies the solution of our mystery."

He rose slowly. The library was deathly still.

A distant shutter banged in the growing equinoxial storm, and from the dim recesses of the house came the rattling of chains, and the sound of someone chopping wood.

"Markham," he said, "who has invariably proved to be the criminal in all of our previous Murder Cases?"

Markham shook his head slowly.

"In every Case," said Vance, "the murderer has always turned out to be *the least likely character in the book!*"

"By God!" breathed Heath in sudden comprehension.

The very air of the still library seemed to vibrate with tense excitement. A flash of lightning lighted the room fitfully for a moment, and was followed by a low growl of thunder. There was a faint ripple of feminine laughter, and a file of Chinese ran out of the grandfather's clock, each rolling a wheat-straw cigarette with bland Oriental calm, and disappeared up the chimney. Slowly a section of the book-case opened out, and a slender jewelled hand groped for the light-switch.

Vance faced the group in the library.

"The murderer is ——"

Instantly every light in the doomed library plunged out. In the pitch blackness there was the sound of a sudden scuffle, a shriek of agony, then a low groan and the thud of a falling body. Across the lawn galloped a huge police-dog, smeared with phosphorus and baying like a hound of hell. Someone placed a cigarette between his teeth; in the brief flare of the match his face was revealed only for a second, but in that fraction of time he had lit his cigarette.

"Lights!"

With a choked oath Markham leapt across the library and turned on the electric switch again. Our eyes, unaccustomed to the sudden glare, blinked unbelievingly for a moment at what we saw. On the floor of the library lay Philo Vance. In his breast a long, sharp fountain-pen quivered upright; and upon his foot, its blood-stained sole stretched toward us mutely, was John Riddell's left tennis shoe.

Somewhere a clock struck thirteen times.

CHAPTER XX

THE SEALED CHAPTER

(*Tuesday, April 2*; 12:01 *a. m.*)

As we stared in horror at the final episode of this terrible tragedy in the John Riddell library, there was a sharp knock on the door, and the impassive figure of Slink, the butler, entered bearing a large paper bundle in his arms. He glanced casually at Vance's prostrate form on the floor, then crossed the room and laid the parcel on the table beside the corpse of Riddell.

"What have you got there?" Heath's voice broke the hysterical tension which had held us all like marble.

"A package for Mr. Riddell, sir," replied Slink coldly.

"Where's it from?"

"*Vanity Fair,* sir," said Slink.

A look of growing horror was spreading over the face of the corpse.

Automatically Heath slit the string with his

knife and opened the paper. From within tumbled a huge heap of new books, of every shape and description: "I'll Tell You Why," by Chic Sale; "The Strange Death of President Harding," by Gaston B. Means; "All About Amos 'n' Andy," by Charles Correll and Freeman F. Cosden; "The Christ of the Crossroad," by E. Stanley Jones; "The Cross-Word Puzzle Book, Number 479"; Dimnet's "The Art of Thinking"; and "Sleep," by Donald A. Laird and Charles C. Muller. . . .

"The new crop of best-sellers," Markham observed to Heath.

With a shriek of torture the corpse of Riddell leapt from his chair, tore off his beard, and faced the astonished group desperately, a hounded look upon his white face.

"I can't—I can't do it—" he writhed in torture. "I can't face it, I tell you. I can't go through this whole dread cycle again. It is more than mortal critic can bear!"

He extended his hands pleadingly.

"I'll confess everything," he wept. "I'll tell the whole story. Only arrest me—take me away—take me away——"

"You are the murderer?" breathed Markham slowly.

Riddell nodded. "I did it," he confessed. "It is all my work. I was insane, mad—I could not stand the torture longer. I stabbed all these authors, one by one, as they came to my library. That was *my* fountain-pen. Those were *my* tennis shoes." He dove beneath the table, and pulled forth a huge packing-box filled to the brim with rubber-soled shoes. "Look," he sobbed hysterically. *"Lefts! All lefts!"*

"And you killed Philo Vance?" added Heath.

"Ah, you fools! You fools!" laughed Riddell. "That was not Philo Vance. Surely you recognized, behind the long jet cigarette-holder and that ceaseless flow of erudition, none other than the familiar features of S. S. Van Dine!"

"But the John Riddell Murder Case—" asked Markham.

"It was all a plot," cried Riddell, "a diabolic plan to trap Van Dine. By luring him to this library, I managed to execute my last murder. My task is over. My job is finished. . . ." He gazed with a shudder of loathing at the waiting pile of books. *"Now take me away. . . ."*

Riddell collapsed sobbing and was led gently from the room.

* * *

There is little more to add to this record. John Riddell was brought to trial and acquitted by every jury in the country. He subsequently retired to a quiet retreat in New York City, where, I understand, he is still doing a little writing now and then, under another name.

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Ford
The John Riddell murder case

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